UNIVERSITY OF
ILLINOIS LIBRARY
AT URBANA-CHAMPAIGN
BOOKSTACKS

The person charging this material is responsible for its return to the library from which it was withdrawn on or before the **Latest Date** stamped below.

Theft, mutilation, and underlining of books are reasons for disciplinary action and may result in dismissal from the University.

To renew call Telephone Center, 333-8400

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS LIBRARY AT URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

SEP 21 1985

FEB 20 2006

L161—O-1096

Westminster Abbey;

OR,

THE DAYS OF THE REFORMATION.

BY THE

AUTHOR OF "WHITEFRIARS," "CÆSAR BORGIA," &c.

Struggling in dark eclipse, and shooting day
On either side of the black orb that veiled it!
DRYDEN.

Quid non potest simulata religio?
ERASMUS.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

LONDON:
JOHN MORTIMER, 141, STRAND.

MDCCCLIV.

823
R56/we
v.2

WESTMINSTER ABBEY;

OR,

The Days of the Reformation.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE VISITOR.

As when a cast of falcons make their flight
At an Herneshaw that lies aloft on wing,
The whiles they strike at him with heedless might,
The warie fowl his bill doth backward wring.

SPENSER.

NEVERTHELESS, Prior Sancgraal was considerably changed from the time when Roodspere first beheld him. Six years had intervened, but a much longer period seemed to have cast its shadow over him. In age he had not passed the third lustre in the maturity of manhood, yet his dark locks were tinged with grey; his sinewy and bent frame was leaner still, and the dusky pallor of his complexion was deepened. Passion and suffering had

worn deep traces in his expression, such as torrents chafe themselves in the rocks they foam over. In other respects he might be considered improved. The air of austere melancholy that overspread his at once noble and sinister aspect, diminished the latter effect, as a general diffusion of twilight softens the rugged features of a landscape. His glance still retained its sombre fire, as Roodspere had speedily occasion to perceive. The same spell that worked upon him seemed to exert an influence on the prior—and their eyes encountered almost the moment the latter crossed the threshold of the Jerusalem Chamber in the abbot's train. And Roodspere could scarcely be mistaken in imagining that Sancgraal started as their glances met,—and though the prior's was withdrawn suddenly as lightning is swallowed in the darkness of a storm, it appeared to Roodspere himself to have taken in the minutest point of his personal characteristics.

The prior's garb was yet more extraordinary than the person it covered. Instead of the robes appropriate to the Benedictine order, he wore what might have become an ancient hermit of the Thebais—one of the companions of St. Anthony, the African inventor of

monachism. Instead of robes of fine cloth and linen, he was clad in a garment of the coarsest sackcloth, fastened round his loins with a girdle of steel thorns, which it seemed must frequently prick and annoy him in his movements—as if nature had not already done enough to make his gait painful and difficult! A hair shirt, or cilice, he very obviously wore beneath this covering, dirty and stained as if it had not undergone lavation for a long period. And not, as of old, did he take pains to prevent the deformity of his foot from being observed, for he wore sandals with iron latchets, instead of shoes, so that the malformation was visible to every eye. The only approach to luxury or ornament he permitted himself to wear was an Agnus of fantastic shellwork, in the shape of a large heart, fastened on his breast—probably the work of some devote female admirer, having very distinguishable marks of feminine taste and skill in its manufacture.

Roodspere was conscious—though he could scarcely himself have said wherefore—that he felt gratified with the ungainly aspect of the confessor of Clerkenwell. Cromwel, on the contrary, drew up his nostrils as if he scented some exceedingly bad odour from the peni-

tential garb of the ascetic prior. The visitor's attention was then naturally directed to the aged prelate whom his mission most immediately concerned.

Abbot Islip still possessed the remains of a dignified and shapely person, though his lack-lustre eyes and something of wandering and vacancy in his manner, confessed that he was at all events not far removed from the state of dotage and physical exhaustion which rendered him, according to report, a mere puppet of authority in the hands of his officials. But all his life he had been so fervently attached to artistic and other cognate pursuits, that he willingly delegated the power with the trouble of his abbatial office to others. Indeed it was rather the will of his admiring but thrifty patron, Henry VII., who desired to reward his services without being at any personal cost, than his own ambition, that raised Islip to the abbot's throne in Westminster. To his artistic genius the king was indebted for the finished marvels of his chapel and tomb—and the entire abbey owed him unbounded thanks for the zeal with which he had laboured at its general decoration and architectural improvement. In other respects Abbot Islip was not at all such a prelate as the age required. He was almost

completely ignorant in theology, and especially unskilled in the great controversy then approaching in thunder to the inmost citadels of the antique church. Unconsciously he had even materially served the cause of the assailants. The art of printing owed to Abbot Islip its earliest encouragement in England. Not that he estimated its consequences, or dreamed that it would become a mighty engine in the affairs of men—least of all, that it would take so great a part in the overthrow of the system thus fostering it into vitality. He encouraged it as a curious art that multiplied the works held in esteem by the monks, with less labour and cost than by the pen of the transcriber. Islip was a man of few passions, and those of a mild and easily subordinated order. His architectural enthusiasm had in fact absorbed almost all of which his calm and monastic blood was capable. It is probable that even his extreme and blind partiality for Sancgraal Bigod was founded rather in appreciation of the lustre added by his high birth and sainthood to the other ornaments of the abbey, than in any more simply human affection. Yet Islip was a man of generous and benevolent feelings, of a jocular and playful turn of mind, as is still evinced by the puns

and rebuses he perpetrated in stone on the walls of the chapel that bears his name. His age—his dilettante-ism—his aversion to the violence and energetic movement the stormy times demanded—did certainly and almost necessarily consign him to a state of tutelage, carefully concealed from himself by the subtlety which was united with the audacity and tempestuous power of the character of him who now ruled in Westminster Abbey, in Abbot Islip's name.

The rest of the audience consisted of nearly all the principal officers and canons regular of the abbey; among whom was Friar Gildas, the cellarer, with an aspect of very great anxiety, but looking demurely down a nose richly studded with the rubies and amethysts bestowed by fluids well surnamed generous in that respect. This he did in imitation of the prior, who kept his eyes firmly fixed on the ground, as if with the profundity of his humility—but maintained in other respects an immoveable and statuesque composure ill-observed by Gildas, who stood in his agitation puffing like a trumpeter on some invisible instrument. A tall foreign monk, the master of the schools attached to the abbey, Father Nicholas of Cologne, was also one of the

auditory—who formed a remarkable contrast to another dignitary that hurriedly entered before the first salutations had been exchanged between the messengers and the monks. A powerful, soldier looking man, seamed with several scars in the visage, who appeared as if he had put on a monk's habit by mistake for a suit of armour, came clattering in like a heavy dragoon dismounted on guard, with a hawk on his wrist, with two large hounds flagging and panting at his heels, as if from some long hunting excursion, and with his habit tucked into a pair of bespattered riding boots. And in truth, though he was now Sacristan of Westminster Abbey, Walter Wenlock—a soldier of fortune, whom Sancgraal, it was stated, had converted to a cloistral life after taking refuge in the Sanctuary for some deed of rapine and violence—still continued to be much more of a freebooter and rough rider than a monk. His first precipitate question on entering revealed that he considered his services were likelier to be required as a physical champion than as a theologian. "Shall I summon the vassalage to arms, Lord Prior?"

"Wherefore so? We have here only peaceful messengers from the Lord Legate—to

whom we are bound to yield all honours and deference—not an onset of robbers and spoilers, brother!" returned the prior, in his naturally harsh but sonorous and deeptoned voice, which seemed kept like a captive under the restraint of his iron will.

"I trust, good my lord monks, ye do not think to resist the cardinal legate's will by a display of armed force?—for if so we will hence, and return with the king's array at our heels to enforce it!" said Cromwel, sternly eyeing the anxious and panic-stricken group.

Wolsey's domination as Legate-à-latere, which he declared to be absolute, and from which he admitted no appeal even to Rome, was submitted to with great reluctance by the English church—more especially by the monastic bodies. But the unbounded powers he wielded in the State so amply supported his claims to spiritual despotism—the dangers that menaced the church from without were so pressing—that no united or general resistance had as yet been attempted to his authority. The action of the arbitrary court he had established for its exercise, under guidance of his courageous and determined secretary, had hitherto crushed all opposition. Prior Sancgraal himself was but too well aware of the

inutility of such a struggle as that which was rather challenged than deprecated by Cromwel's threatening looks; and he replied with humility, "God forbid that we should dream of such folly, such madness! We are poor, unarmed monks—defenceless as women—who do but ask leave to pray in quietness for the welfare and pardon of our causeless enemies and detractors, and the general cleansing of the church from the leperous spots that do infect her beauteous body now in so many parts!"

"It is well—I am glad to espy so meet a submission among ye all—if all speak with your tongue, lord prior, as we hear is wontedly the case?—Certes, you speak and act for all when it pleases you!" said Cromwel, perusing the alarmed and cowering groups with evident satisfaction.

"Be pleased then to instruct us in the Lord Legate's pleasure—that we may do what in us lies to satisfy it! Our father abbot, as you discern, is not yet enow recomforted from a late sickness, for too long discourse," returned Sancgraal.

"Nay, son, nay," said Islip, raising himself with difficulty but good determination, on his elbows in his couch. "It is but the old

cough come back again with the autumn mists that choke old men's breath in their lungs! Your camomile cardiacs have done me marvellous good, and we will let master secretary see we are not—as my lord cardinal will have it we are—a mere gargol head to another man's waterspout! We are no abbot of wood or stone—no mitred carving in our abbey, master secretary—and albeit our sight wex something dim and troubled with years—we can see, when need is, through our crystal lens which you brought us, son, from Italy—as well as ever we did in our lives—or at least sithence we completed the Psalmist's days of man! But what is this business? Why are we disturbed at our necessary labours in holy Edward's honour?—and methinks to gild and floreate candles five cubits high looks not as if a man were altogether gone and past his offices!"

"I bring ye letters mandatory from the Lord legate and Cardinal Sanctæ Ceciliæ trans Tiberim!" returned Cromwel, with a triumph in his tones he found it impossible or did not deign to suppress.

"Sancta Cecilia!—the virgin martyr of Rome?—a most holy and fitting institution!" said Sancgraal, with something approaching to

a sneer in the peculiar stress he laid on the words. The secretary meanwhile produced his letters, sealed with Wolsey's seal nearly a span broad, and offered them with a formal inclination to Abbot Islip.

"Take them, son Sancgraal, and read them aloud, for our general comfort and edification—we have not our precious crystal eyes at hand with us to decypher a notarial scroll!" said that dignitary. The prior mechanically extended his hand, but simultaneously Gislebert interposed by laying his bony grasp like a paralysis on his pupil's arm. "We receive no letters mandatory from the cardinal's court, son! We are a free and exempt abbey, owning the jurisdiction only of the holy see!" he muttered in a voice hoarse with agitation.

"There is no abbey or house of religion in all England exempt from the Lord Legate's jurisdiction, who represents the very person of the Pope's holiness among us, by his absolute commission!" said Cromwel, sternly. "And well ye wot ye have already protested your privileges in vain before the supreme pontiff himself! whereof we have more exact information than ye think!"

Sancgraal coloured darkly, and somewhat testily shaking off the treasurer's hold, ob-

served:—"What avails a childish refusal of the sort? Doth the ostrich shun the shafts of its pursuers by burying its head in the sand?" and he broke the seal with a vehement—almost a violent action.

It seemed as if Sancgraal ran down the contents of the epistle with a flash of the eye, for he almost instantaneously grew deadly pale—and pausing he gazed at the secretary in mute astonishment and dismay. "What is the matter, my lord prior? Methought it was so fairly engrossed that he who ran might read! Or doth it dazzle you—like the writing on the wall?"

"There are serpents indeed in the twists of this text-hand!—but it troubles not me," replied Sancgraal, regaining his self-possession by a wonderful effort of will, and he proceeded to read aloud, in very calm and unruffled tones, the contents of the parchment.

The letters mandatory commenced with a preamble, setting forth that divers irregularities and dangerous offences against morals and the fitting government of the church, existing in the monastery of St. Peter of Westminster, having come to the notice of the Cardinal Legate of York, his grace, in exercise of the powers confided to him by the

Holy See, had been pleased to appoint a VISITOR, to the said monastery and community: With power to inquire into the state of its discipline and manners, and apply canonical remedies to what might be found amiss. The abbot, prior, sub-prior, treasurer, and sacristan, canons regular, and brethren in general of the Abbey of Westminster, were thereupon commanded to receive and render every species of obedience due to the vicarial representative of the powers of the most Holy See itself, in the person of Master Raphael Roodspere, doctor and licentiate of divinity, of Jesus College, Cambridge. Instructions were given to furnish the said visitor with a suitable residence and attendance in the abbey; and all officers and functionaries were commanded, under penalties of forfeiture, to communicate whatever information the visitor might require, on any subject connected with his mission; and the monastery was to make him a daily fee of one rose-noble during his residence in it. This mandate was signed by Wolsey, with all his titles and distinctions at full and formidable length.

The presence of a visitor was the usual forerunner of Wolsey's confiscations, as it afterwards became of those of his apt pupil,

Cromwel; and the great monasteries, like the larger fowl in a farmyard from which the kite has swooped the chickens and ducklings, had reason to apprehend their turn would come. Few of the individuals of the community of Westminster could deem themselves secure against the results of a rigorous inquisition; at all events the consternation was as complete and general as if such were the settled conviction in every mind. Abbot Islip himself stared in blank amazement—and Father Gislebert, recovering the audacity and obstinacy of former years, raised his feeble tones almost to a yell. "A visitor! —a visitor in our exempt abbey!—a visitor to coin false accusations against us, and give the wealth of St. Edward to the division of the vile courtiers and courtesans of York Place! We are free; we are exempt! Son Sancgraal, make protestation of our exemptions, whereof we can produce the charters granted by St. Edward the King, and confirmed by Pope Nicholas II., and let us drive these usurpers forth of our precincts!"

Nevertheless the monks—doubtless with the feelings of an army long accustomed to a leader, who even in the confusion and dismay of defeat, look to him only for orders—

turned their affrighted eyes on Prior Sancgraal, without responding to this appeal.

There is something more awful in the suppression of the mightier passions, under the energy of a potent will, than in their wildest outbreak—more menacing and dangerous! And so Cromwel thought as he turned with a contemptuous smile from the vehement old treasurer to the silent and sombre prior. The struggle Sancgraal maintained inwardly for several moments painted itself obscurely on his countenance as the grisly fancies of a magic lantern on the darkened sheet which children set their shadowy pantomime at work on. But the habitual sway of a dissimulation, taught by the entire education and life of the alternate victim and champion of the system he personified, enabled Sancgraal to subdue the natural manifestations of the passions raging in his heart.

"Nay, Father Gislebert! if the cardinal legate possesses the powers he claims, we cannot deny a right of visitation thereto appended!" he said. "And for mine own part, I am right well content, if some honest and dispassionate reporter be sent among us, that by his presence and observation he should testify our innocence of all the evil occasion

alleged by the lord legate for his interference —and procure us at length a respite from our long and grievous persecution! Perchance, achieve what I have so ardently prayed and laboured to effect—the full restoration of St. Benedict's most holy rule among us!"

"God-a-mercy, my lord prior! how may that be? How can we keep so many commandments when our first parents, in paradise, could not keep the only one laid upon them?" blundered forth the aghast cellarer, Gildas.

"My son, what mean you? Shall we admit this violent usurpation of St. Edward's rights, without protest or struggle?" exclaimed Father Gislebert, in evident astonishment.

"What can we else? Mind you not, good father, how the Cell of Romburgh was seized with the armed hand, despite all resistance of its faithful vassalage? Would you have us give colourable cause for the like violence?" said Sancgraal, with warning emphasis. "Let us submit to ills we cannot resist, with a good grace! God and St. Edward in their own time will come to our aid! The Cardinal claims to represent the supreme pontiff, and God forbid that we should fail in any article of spiritual obedience! *Sancta obedientia!* Yourself stamped that word in

me as in adamant!—What were an army that obeys not its leaders, but a rabble rout, easily scattered by the serried assault of its enemies?—Yet, sirs, it is but fitting you should know on what peril ye and your senders contravene our privileges, if unlawfully ye do so! Heard ye never the CURSE OF ST. EDWARD? 'Whosoever violates the freedoms and immunities I have granted my monastery of Westminster, I will he lose his name, worship, dignity, and power in this world, and with the great traitor Judas, who betrayed our Saviour, be damned to the pit of hell in the next!' Let whoso doeth the wrong dree the penalty:—*Reddat illi Dominus in die illo!* Amen."

All the monks without hesitation gave an audible response to this objurgation—all but the almoner, who coughed and hemmed very loudly to show that he took no part in the else general utterance.

"I shall not fail to report your good wishes to my lord the cardinal! He will give ye thanks doubtless in turn!" said Cromwel, with a scornful laugh. "Remains only now that I present to ye your visitor—this wise and learned doctor, Master Raphael Roodspere!" and he drew his coadjutor triumphantly forward. Sancgraal's eye fell with an expression

impossible to be analysed, on the person thus introduced to his notice—fear, suspicion, piercing inquiry, all concentrated in a glance! He withdrew it almost instantly from the calm, searching gaze that encountered his own, and there was almost a smile, lurid as an opening thundercloud, on his lips, as he repeated "Raphael Roodspere!—Roodspere? Not I trust he of the name of whom our sub-prior, Reynauld, when he was in Cambridge searching for proofs of Bilney's heresies, heard it commonly reported—commonly reported—that he was an offshoot—of that stubborn plant of heresy!—as too plainly appeared when the cardinal refused to let the whole wasp's nest there be routed out!" It was evident from the seemingly broken sense of this speech that the prior's ideas embraced at the same time the reports of Roodspere's relationship to the cardinal, and the facts of his imputed heterodoxy.

"Master Roodspere learned Greek of Bilney—that is true—and ye may all learn Greek of Master Roodspere, an it please you!" interposed Cromwel, hastily. "But this is beside the question—do ye accept him, Trojan or Greek, as your visitor?"

"O blessed St. Edward! how will thy

canonized bones keep in their cerements, if a disciple of the devilish Lollards of Cambridge is permitted to approach thy shrine?" gasped Father Gislebert.

"Trust in the rivetted marble and molten metal, to hold them in, good father!" returned Cromwel. "Four hundred years have Edward's bones lain quiet enough, in spite, I'll warrant me, of some provocation to arise therefrom among yourselves! Tush! the days of miracles are over—you do not frighten even children in daylight!"

"My son, again I counsel you, let us utterly reject and refuse this visitation—trusting that the saints who of old protected our foundation, when the painted ravens flew from the standards of the Danes upon our towers, and for three days and nights spears of flame shone around our walls—will save us yet again from these worse despoilers!" exclaimed Gislebert. "Yea, sirs, return to your cardinal, and tell him that we need no visitor; that we have a prior, duly elected *per viam Sancti Spiritus*, whose holiness and severity of rule render all aid unnecessary, were it to reform Sodom and Gomorrah themselves!"

"You liken your monastery to strange places, dan treasurer!" returned Cromwel,

coolly, "but again I tell you, you have not now to do with a parcel of rustics staring at the wooden mermaids and giants in a fair! Neither are you chief spokesman here, I trow. My lord abbot, will you take this visitor, ay, or no?"

"He is of goodly visage! He would make a most excellent limning for Master Holbein in the picture of the Expulsion he is to paint us in the choir!—Is your name Raphael, say you, sir? What was the angel called, son Sancgraal, who drove our first parents out of Eden?" said the abbot, in a tone of dreamy vacancy, but gazing very intently at the visitor.

"It matters little, my lord, to the question! Such as he is we do accept him to promote this office among us, under protestation of the cardinal's right to visit us, being exempts!" said the prior, with great impatience. "Father treasurer, and brethren, let us cheerfully submit to the cross laid upon us, and follow patiently also up the steeps of our earthly Calvary!"

"But there is yet a trifle we have omitted in our hurry to mention!" continued Cromwel, with a flush of vindictive triumph. "It hath also pleased the lord legate to release

you of Westminster from your irksome duties as confessors of the nuns of Clerkenwell—for doubtless it is as toilsome for men of your interior and recollected spirit, to have charge of women's consciences, as it were to herd wild geese in the marishes! It hath pleased his grace, I say, to transfer the cure thereof to Master Roodspere also—nuns, novices, and all!"

"Nuns—novices!" exclaimed Sancgraal, with a petrified glance at the young priest who thus additionally superseded him. "Oh, then, sweet Lady of heaven!" he continued, clasping his hands and staring upward till only the sultry white glare of his eyes was visible, "Star of the else hopeless storm-tossed mariner! thou only canst save thy gentle lamb from the wolf, when the wolf appoints the watchers of the flock!"

"If you speak of Mistress Paulet, lord prior, she is in more danger in the pen from wolves disguised as shepherds' dogs!" returned Cromwel. "Howbeit his grace will no longer suffer you to misuse your influence over a simple girl, urging her to all manner of disobedience and scandal against more lawful authority! Look again, and you will see the

cardinal is most peremptory in this, since he has added the ordinance in his own hand!"

Sancgraal mechanically complied; but though his eye dwelt on the page, he continued silent and absorbed for several minutes in deep inner reflection. It could not have taken him all that time to peruse the few words of the cardinal's postscript, even repeatedly.

"Well! so be it! God's will be done even in this!" he said at last, with a profound sigh. "Our blessed Lady will join her prayers with St. Edward's, on this behalf also! I will not fear, I do not fear, that the painted delusions and snares of the world can lure that chaste and timorous maiden forth into its howling wilderness! — that the pure and holy love of Lily-Virgin's heart can wander from the celestial spouse she has chosen into such derogation as—as any earthly substitute must needs be!—Nor can all the pomp and pleasures of the earth win one to remain upon it whose foot is already many scales on the Jacob's ladder of light that leads upwards into eternal bliss!"

"How long would it take a man of thy flesh to mount by such a ladder, Friar Gildas?" said Cromwel, laughing at the huge

monk's start at finding himself thus suddenly singled out by the dread messenger of the legatine court.

"Heaven forfend, master secretary! though I trust I am no more unfit than others for my call!" said the alarmed cellarer, with an inhalation resembling the snort of a whale rising for air.

"And now, sirs, as you may well perceive, our aged father is in need of rest, and can no longer parley!—I pray you go and choose your own lodging, master visitor—orders shall be given for your due tendance and hospitality," said Sancgraal, apparently desirous to conclude the painful scene.

"Let me guide you to your hospitium, sir—it is my rotation, master secretary!" said Almoner Benson, presenting himself with timorous eagerness to take part on the winning side.

"Ay, do the duties of your service, good brother Quodvultdeus!" said the prior, with a bitter stress on the name which in its seemingly modest meaning and pompous resonance not ill expressed the character of its owner—Englishing into Whatever-God-pleases! The almoner shrunk back in confusion, but Cromwel saluted him with a cheerful slap

of the shoulder, exclaiming, "Lead on, good brother, then; indeed, our visitor hath need of every kind of hospitality, for he has come far and fast to do you service."

"But first let me assure you, venerable lord abbot, that from me you will receive only the reverent homage and duty of a son!" said Roodspere, who was much affected at the aged prelate's folorn and bewildered look.

"Hark; with what silver bells this executioner's axe is hung!—In what sweet honey doth the cardinal give poison!" said Father Gislebert.

"Nay, good father, you judge too rashly!" said Sancgraal, with truly saintly meekness. "Let our father abbot give Master Roodspere his benediction, and let us all make him joyfully welcome to his brotherly office of castigation!"

Roodspere somewhat hesitatingly approached the abbot's couch, and knelt, and the venerable old man looked at his fair and ingenuous countenance with visible interest and kindness. But a glance at the fevered visage of the dispossessed Esau on the other side of the daybed changed what was perhaps his first intention. "Nay rise, fair son," he said; "by no act of mine must this unjust and tyrannous

usurpation over our exempt community be sanctioned—but the king's cunning limnour, Hans Holbein, will be glad of such an one to put in the great picture in the choir! You are, therefore, very welcome—and God bless you, though I may not, for your good looks and great humility! Let him be lodged in the great chamber of the pilgrims, son Philip—and so—but we are spent!"

"Brother Philip died last leaf-fall, sir—I am hospitaler now, my lord; you must needs remember," said the almoner, regaining courage. "And now let your reverend honour follow me—I will lead you to a bower a king might sleep in—yea, and hath—contentedly."

"I need none such—I am a poor scholar, wont only to fare as such," replied Roodspere; but anxious also to finish this irksome ceremonial of reception, he accepted the guest-master's invitation, and with Cromwel left the Jerusalem Chamber.

"How like you of your counter-player, Master Raphael?" whispered Cromwel, putting his arm in the visitor's.

"A man to fear, were he faced in a less cause!" replied Roodspere.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE MONKS OF WESTMINSTER.

Sainct Benet, that their order brought,
Ne'er fashioned them in such manère;
I trow it never entered his thought,
That they should use such great powère!

CHAUCER.

THE almoner conducted "his reverend honour," as he dubbed the new official, and Cromwel, to an apartment usually reserved for the most welcome and esteemed guests of the monastery. It consisted of a spacious chamber over the Great Cloister, hung with ancient but very rich arras, opening on one hand into a bedroom or dormitory, on the other into an oratory furnished with a little altar and all the necessary appliances of a private chapel. The lay furniture was massive and most elaborately carved and gilded, especially the bedstead, which was covered with an endless profusion of ornaments in black oak. All the windows of the suite looked pleasantly over the highly cultivated gardens and woody enclosures to

the south of the Abbey, with the exception of the oratory, whose deep-set, ivy-clustered lattices opened on the balustraded leads over the arches of the Cloister.

The hospitality of the wealthy monks of Westminster was in such constant requisition that they found everything as ready prepared for a stranger's reception as if he had been expected. They had only to take possession—and Roodspere, fatigued with the events of the day, would gladly have done so without further ceremony of induction. But the almoner seemed inclined to linger, and as Cromwel at least listened to his observations with great interest, he had a reasonable pretext for continuing his presence. It had long been evident to Roodspere, as well as to the more experienced secretary, that in this man they had to do with one of the most truckling and time-serving character, who appeared anxious at any price to ingratiate himself with the powers that threatened to be, and had little to hope from those that were. Grudges of old standing, besides present hopes and fears, very visibly influenced his conduct, and especially he nourished an extraordinary though carefully covered rancour against the prior, kept in order by the timidity of his own character,

and the dread inspired by Sancgraal's power in the Abbey. But his innuendos against this formidable superior, however malicious and even horrible, were yet so vague and mysterious, that Cromwel himself, with the most earnest desire, could extract but little definite meaning from them. Still it was clear, though rather from his sneers and glances than his words, that he was no believer in the imputed sanctity and austerity of Prior Sancgraal, and he managed to make this opinion sufficiently obvious even while affecting to controvert Cromwel's direct asseveration of his own incredulity. "Without doubt, our Lord Prior *is* a man raised by God for the comfort and support of the tribulated church in these latter times!" he exclaimed. "I say not that it was always so—but St. Augustine himself in his youth (as he putteth on open record in his confessions) found infinite matter of reproach in his own demeanour. And therefore 'tis no great marvel if our young saint may not be held altogether blameless in the past! True, it is but seven years agone, in the time of Hunne's affair, when the great outbreak was! Yet it was but a six months' mad revel —without stint or pause—while our worthy treasurer was holding out, in captivity, against

the king and cardinal!—But Dominus Sancgraal was only a young man then! and brought up in such simplicity and ignorance that 'twas a miracle in itself! When he was full sixteen years of age, I once heard him set the whole school in a roar by waking me up out of a deep revery, and it being his turn, putting it as a scholastic question: '*Sive mulieres homines sunt?*' *Whether women are men*, in the vulgar! Father Gislebert had taught him methinks that they were some manner of devouring wild beasts! But he had his doubts belike thus early, in spite of all old Gislebert's mummy-craft to take the heart and bowels out of the living man, and put in church-spices instead!—or else it was his craft even then to feign such ignorance! But, nay; seven years agone he was doubtless younger than any secular in suchlike holy simplicities — and it was evil example led him astray! There was drunken Gildas ever ready with his flagon, and Walter Wenlock with his hawks and hounds, and his worse desports in the Tophets and Gehennas of the Sanctuary—and whatever else was ill he lacked not for abundant professors and teachers among us! In faith, those were wild days! The Abbey was filled from morning till night with wassail and revellers—courtiers,

swashbucklers, musicians, singers, I know not what all of idle and dissolute vagabonds—all who could make any manner of mirth or solace. Our abbot meanwhile saw nothing—heard nothing—and but for the news I at length bore of what was happening, to the treasurer in his dungeon — I would the cardinal's grace were better reminded of it!—Father Gislebert would never have pleaded at the king's bar, and the sore would have remained to this day open between church and state! But he would rather lose his own soul methinks than his dear pupil's; and so he submitted, and came back among us, and sent him on penance and study to Rome and Jerusalem! And when he returned after his long cruise in the Universities and abode at the Sorbonne, he had become the blessed saint and learned master we do now all behold and reverence in him! Yet that my act, which was Dominus Sancgraal's very salvation, through the perversity of men's hearts, turns out to be the beginning of all my disfavour with him! I wot well he hath never forgiven me, for all his fine and loving speeches! Else wherefore should he make ruffianly Wenlock sacristan, after I have served without advancement in the ambry these I know not how many

years, as little to my gain and profit as such a thankless office as to feed the vagabond poor from our scraps must needs ever be?"

"Perchance he would show the brighter by contrast—by being exalted alone in his sanctity among ye, like the solitary star that guides seamen over the waters!" said Cromwel. "But I trust we may confide in his good outwards — so far at least as regards women—or else we may find our novice of Clerkenwell rescued something late in the battle!—Your prior seemed to part with his hard-won prize easily enough methought—as an he were weary of it!"

"Be not too sure of aught you seem to spy in him, master secretary," said the almoner, observing that Roodspere's attention was also powerfully excited by this observation. "I do remember me that among all my informations to Father Gislebert—though, mark ye, in no wise do I believe in the sayings concerning *him* and Hunne's wife!—nothing irked him more than the word I brought regarding the lavish entertainment and visitation which Dominus Sancgraal made to her, during the treasurer's imprisonment! Doubtless for the treasurer's sake, she being in some sort a fellow martyr, and falsely accused with

him!—certes, most falsely!—for Gislebert would never else have maltreated her in the way he did when he came home among us—stripping her of all her borrowed wealth and sumptuousness, and turning her out of the Sanctuary nigh as naked of friends and succour, as jolly King Edward's paramour, Dame Shore, when the proclamation ran that no man under pain of death, and forfeiture of all his goods, should do her any ministering or alms!"

"Ay, was it so? — And how sped she then?—I have oft made inquiry, but could never yet meet with one who could tell me where to seek for her!" said Cromwel, with vividly excited interest.

"Where is the wind that blew that March? —She died in a ditch most likely, even as she did of whom I spoke erewhile!" returned the almoner.

"Well, brother, it is enough for this present —we shall talk more anon—and especially concerning this Dan Gloria of ours—whom I have some notion of promoting to his deserts—if they be as high as the gallows or Paul's pillory!" returned Cromwel. "But now I must depart, after some special items added to master visitor's charge — which are of a

private nature, by my lord's command—else, in good sooth, I should never think to keep them from so tried and serviceable a friend as I have found and see well you will further prove."

The almoner bowed meekly, and finding it impossible to mistake the nature of the hint—after solemnly commending himself to the good favour of the Cardinal's grace, of the secretary, and honourable visitor, he retired. And scarcely had he left the chamber when Cromwel, with an eagerness altogether out of his usually calm and calculating processes, exclaimed, "Here are good scents for a visitor's nose, Master Roodspere! What deem you of our Quodvultdeus's discourse?"

"I know not what to deem! But heaven forbid that we should serve a good cause by evil means, and commit blacker iniquities in our imaginings than our enemies in their deeds!" said Roodspere.

"Tut, the devil himself could not invent beyond reality!" replied Cromwel, impatiently. "Examine the records of my court, and judge if they stink not worse in the nostrils of heaven than Pavia three days after the victory!—and the sun of Italy, my doctor, soon ripens you your corpse! Faugh, me-

thinks I smell it now!—I do ever sicken at the perfume of violets, for the field was all scented with them, mingling most horribly with the charnel noisomeness! And such a sweetness methinks I do discern about this glamour-eyed Roman chaunter of ours! Why dost thou start? I deem no worse of him, as I have heretofore said, than that he is—a woman!—Ay, indeed, but such a woman! if, as myself do almost fear to think, it shall prove that a suspicion which hath darted like a jagged ray of light into my mind, prove founded!—What dost thou think I suspect?" he concluded, with visible excitement.

"That, belike, the prior and this woman—if woman she be—encountered on his foreign pilgrimages, and that she hath followed him hither?" said Roodspere.

"Nay!" returned Cromwel, "Nay! I snuff blacker carrion still! Heard ye not what the almoner relates concerning Hunne's wife, and her abode in the Sanctuary? What if Dan Gloria be identical with Popess Dalilah—and Popess Dalilah with Marchant Hunne's treacherous wife, that betrayed his very carcass to the flames? Ye may well shudder! It opens a glimpse into our prior's character, if

this be so, like one into the roaring flames of hell! What dost thou say?"

"If this be so—or aught that resembles it possible—O, Master Cromwel! your poor ward were indeed safer in the very jaws of him who goeth up and down, seeking whom he may devour!" said Roodspere, with a deadly sinking of the heart.

"Use your new powers as confessor in a confessor-like way, and we shall soon guess the truth in that matter," said Cromwel. "Yet true, she may be too well schooled by your predecessor for your fathoming!—and be that how it may, it must be our first object to pierce the depths of the Roman chaunter's mystery! By my foolish suddenness I have put him on his guard against me—but he cannot have the like cause to dread you in any but your capacity of visitor. Now I would have you apply yourself to banish fears on that score by an open condescension and favour towards him. I would have you feign an earnest desire to acquire the Italian church sing-song, of which he is professed master. This will throw ye together privily—and you may see him without his mask at seasons—mayhap of mind as well as of visage—and I may gather confirmations from your report of mine own suspicions!

Or, by the Lord Harry! if our Roman be any relative of Popess Dalilah, thou art as likely a lad, with thy goodly face and soft honeytalk—to come at the truth, in a fair way, as fate could have selected—say nought of chance!"

"Master secretary, I pray you jest not with me as it may be is your wont with others!" said Roodspere, with crimsoning brows. "My ways of life have thus far been as white, though it may be as bleak and shelterless, as the paths of the wind through the snow! I will use no indirect or unlawful means to accomplish even lawful ends!"

"Let not these wolves hear thee bleating, howbeit, in the wastes!" said Cromwel, somewhat startled and evidently but little pleased at the vehemence of this negation. "Well, God helps him who helps himself!—I shall do what in me lies to unwrap the blood-stained threads of this mystery!—Meanwhile at least do what you can to soothe our Blackcap's alarms—and to baffle Gardiner's malice by the discretion of your proceedings here!—Gadzooks, man!—would not his look, when he espied you, have cruddled vinegar?—And he is squatted at the Cardinal's ear even now!—But go by my guidance, and we shall baffle all his malice yet!—We will begin, master vi-

sitor, by obtaining a full account of the wealth and possessions of the Abbey, to tempt the cardinal with the richness of the spoil! And then we will fall to work, and by a strict restoration of holy Benedict's rule (whereof I have obtained a certified copy from the Roman Datary, at a cost of thirty golden crowns, being thirty more than it is worth for any other purpose but to harry the monks that do affect to bear his yoke!)—drive these jolly brethren of ours into open mutiny and rebellion! By which time we shall, I trust, have gathered what may justify the severities that must thence ensue, in all men's opinions—and if by the amazing detection of this saint of theirs"—

But Cromwel was cut short in his harangue by a knock at the door—which was followed up by the entrance of the ponderous personage of Cellarer Gildas, who presented himself now in his capacity of purveyor and provender-master, to inquire what refreshment the visitor and secretary would be pleased to partake. A natural inclination to jollity and bonhomme evidently struggled with apprehension in Gildas's demeanour; but as so high a functionary offered himself on such a service, it was evident that the prior's submission would

find apt imitators. Nevertheless Roodspere, who was extremely fatigued, and desired some leisure to put his ideas in order, declined all present hospitality, in spite of the cellarer's pressing entreaties; and Cromwel drily observed that on all future occasions master visitor would take his meals with the brethren in the refectory. "We must ascertain, among other disputable points," he observed, "that ye do not exceed St. Benedict's precepts in your diet—and 'tis safest, where there are Italians to season meats, to mess with your host!—ay, out of the same platter, if it may be."

"Master visitor will make but scant repasts, so!—for our prior fasts often, and feasts never!" said Gildas, much flurried with this announcement. "But I trust we are not to be starved for our sins!—I had rather go barefoot to Walsingham or Canterbury!"

"Well, I am not so abstemious as this wise scholar of ours, master cellarer—I will taste with you in the buttery ere I depart," said Cromwel, after a steady survey of the monk's rubicund visage—and rising he bade Roodspere farewell with an appearance of formality, and not of the intimate unreserve which had hitherto pervaded their intercourse. "Fail

not to visit us at nigh intervals in York Place —his grace will find some leisure moment amid all his toils to note your presence, Master Roodspere!" he said, with hidden significance. "But for my own part I shall come ever and anon to study my Vulgate under your learned guidance, that I may have a text always ready for my gainsayers, who will have it no laic should hold a penman's place in our court. Meanwhile, dan cellarer, rest assured I shall not fail to report what good obedience, order, and all manner of comformable doings master visitor and I have so far found in your Abbey."

With these gracious words, the secretary withdrew, under the flattered but still fluttered cellarer's convoy—and to his great relief and satisfaction, Roodspere remained alone.

Yet his reflections, when thus at length abandoned to their solitary formation, were not at all of a pleasant or desirable character. He found himself alone—alone, he could not doubt, in the midst of enemies—and enemies of the most powerful and crafty organization; doubtfully assured of the protection and support of the cardinal, whom he felt that he must have deeply offended by his interference on behalf of Lily-Virgin, and whose ear was

now possessed by the bitter though causeless hatred of Stephen Gardiner. Even the alliance of the energetic secretary of the common law was scarcely a counterpoise to this hostility, and Roodspere already felt that a great difference of opinion, and purposes, and means, existed between himself and his only ally. Yet amidst all the dangers of his own position, it is strange but it is true, Roodspere's anxiety remained almost completely absorbed in the consideration of those besetting the youthful orphan of the Paulets. It was in relation to her chiefly that the appalling problem of Sancgraal's real character had become to him one of a paramount and all-devouring interest! —and the master-impulse which now swayed his mind appeared in the very first acts of his visitation.

It is true that he presented himself on the following morning, with an apparently calm and indifferent aspect, in the refectory, when the bell rang for the morning repast of the monks, as if to inaugurate his office in a sociable and friendly manner. But his real object was to discharge his first disagreeable duty in Westminster as speedily as possible, and then to proceed to Clerkenwell in pursuance of another of its branches which had

become to him of infinitely more interest. Perhaps, also, he expected to find some opportunity of observing the præcentor and his patron; and of ascertaining if any support might thence be derived for Cromwel's extraordinary hypothesis. But in this latter expectation, if he formed it, he was destined to be completely disappointed.

The Refectory of the Abbey of Westminster was an apartment of the most spacious proportions, in keeping with the extensive hospitality exercised by all the wealthier monastic foundations of England. It extended along the ground floor, nearly the whole south wall of the great cloister, looking from its numerous lancet windows over the orchards of the Abbey on one side, and on the other into the stately quadrangle formed by the church and its adhering monastic buildings. A vast table in the shape of a cross, extending nearly the entire length of the vaulted hall, was spread daily, thrice, in this chamber. The upper end was appropriated to the chief officials and superior members of the fraternity of Westminster, and was presided over by the Lord Abbot himself whenever he mealed in public. More usually the Prior of Westminster, for the time being, sate in the elevated chair, under a richly carved

canopy of cedar wood, which was the place of highest dignity otherwise reserved for the abbot. Guests of distinction and the main body of the regular canons filled the benches of the great transverse of the table, while the inferior brethren, novices, and lay-brothers of the wealthy foundation, to the number of sixty, and frequently upwards, occupied all the lower board. But though almost every other member of this numerous community was present, Roodspere's rapid glance nowhere discerned either Prior Sancgraal or the Italian præcentor He was also struck with the absence of all luxury and ostentation from the preparations for the morning repast, at a period when the monasteries were so renowned for their good cheer and slack observance of the ascetic rules of their founders.

The visitor was, however, received with every mark of deference and respect by the monks present. They all arose as soon as he made his appearance, and had evidently awaited it before they broke their fast. Father Gislebert came forward in a very different manner from the one he had adopted on Roodspere's first introduction, though he could still only constrain himself into a very forced appearance of welcome and cordiality. He could control

his physical ailment more easily, or else his palsy only mastered him on occasions of excessive nervous excitement, for it was no longer obvious. He greeted Roodspere with harsh humility, and informed him that the prior being compelled to absent himself on a vow which he could only fulfil in the solitude of his cell, had requested that meanwhile the visitor would take his place and office of observation, in the abbot's throne. Roodspere declined this honour with a strong internal feeling of disappointment, but with no outward expression of his sentiments—and then, with a grimly smile, Gislebert expressed his hopes that the visitor would observe nothing in excess of their rule, in the preparations for their morning repast. "Nay, father," replied Roodspere, "I come not to busy myself on such points as these. It is not what enters the mouth that defiles the soul!—and is it not also written 'Why do we and the disciples of the Pharisees fast oft, but thine fast not at all?'—And yonder, methinks, is a brother who looks as if he were not wonted to such hermit fare! I pray ye, let not my presence debar any man of his accustomed innocent delights!" He could not forbear smiling as he spoke, at the distressed aspect of Cellarer Gildas, who was gazing with rueful

resignation at the coarse ration of brown bread and small beer placed before him.

"Do you then counsel—nay, command us, master visitor—to violate the injunctions of our rule?" said the treasurer, eagerly.

"Sir, I will answer you most fittingly by informing you that I have not yet received a certified copy thereof, and am ignorant of its provisions!—But until I have ascertained St. Benedict's will as to how his monks should break their fast, I do desire and command your cellarer here that he constantly purvey and serve such repasts as have been of his customary providing hitherto!" returned Roodspere.

"Laud be to our lady!—let the cold brawns and pasties and hoops of strong ale and our snowbread, as they call it all hereabout, for the driven whiteness of our wheat—be brought in!" said Gildas, turning with delighted animation to a group of sewers who were standing with folded arms, gazing with melancholy bewonderment at the tables which it was their wonted office to cover in a far different style—and who started instantly into joyous activity at the command.

"Come you among us then to take part with the knavish epicures and swillcans of

this abbey, who have too long held the upper hand in it, master visitor?" exclaimed Gislebert, in astonishment. "If for the pampering of your own appetites you do this, it needs not, for being a secular priest, we did not purpose to bind you by our rules, and a goodly confection is set forth for you under the abbot's dais!"

"Take it yourself, good father, and the chair of state also! I have already told you I am a poor scholar, and ask only the place and fare of such—the which I find here!" replied Roodspere; and selecting himself a seat at the lower table before a bowl of milk and a hunk of coarse bread, intended for one of the novices, he fell to work, without further ceremony than a short grace, and with apparent appetite, at the uninviting viands. But his humility and abstinence found an immediate imitator in the personage of Almoner Benson, who glided almost instantly to a place beside him on the novices' hard oaken bench. "This is what I have always said—we needed good example more than anything else, master visitor!" he whispered, in tones of insinuating but timorous compliment.

"But all are not here to partake the benefit of it, as it seems you do, dan almoner," re-

turned Roodspere, whose contempt and dislike for this man's cringing characteristics did not prevent him from discerning how useful his alliance might prove. "Your prior is, of course, to be excused, sith he keeps a black hermit's fast, we learn; but where is your Italian choirmaster?"

"Ay, where?" said the almoner, ranging with his half-closed eyes over the assemblage. "Why, sir, jackal and lion herd together, they say, for as unlike animals as they are—and my lord prior keeps all his great devotions in his Hermitage! Yea, and to heighten the merits of his hunger and abstinence—for I have myself seen it—he will oft have a rich banquet, with all manner of cates, served before him daily up there, while he starves and thirsts for a week together on cresses and water! It takes much to subdue the flesh in men—in some men more than in others, belike! But for this præcentor of ours, he is so obstinate and humorsome, quarrels so with all men and things that fall not in with his wayward grain, that, like an ill-conditioned cur which only its master can keep in order, he seldom or never appears among us but in our prior's company." And wiping his lips—an habitual gesture with him—the almoner

indulged in a slight, cackling laugh, which was lost in the loud, magisterial tones of a voice that began suddenly a Latin recitation. Raising his eyes, Roodspere perceived that Father Nicholas of Cologne had mounted to a species of pulpit or reading-desk, whence he delivered, in the pompous and authoritative tones only to be acquired by a professor in a schoolroom, what was then properly called a *lecture*—being literally a reading of a portion of the Vulgate translation of the Scriptures. But head of the monastic schools as he was, and confident as he seemed in his own ability, Father Nicholas's recitation abounded in false quantities and mispronunciations, which jarred strangely on Roodspere's classical ears. And yet the almoner informed him that the custom of delivering these extracts during meals had long fallen into disuse in the Abbey of Westminster, and was only now revived in his favour. On the whole, the visitor saw no great temptation to lengthen his repast; and before the boards were well covered with the viands that customarily dispelled the first hunger of the luxurious monks of Westminster he had concluded it. Nevertheless, he waited with great patience until the lecture came to an end, when he arose, and addressing himself

to the treasurer, who had taken the abbot's chair, and was devotely listening, with his face buried in his clasped hands, he uttered what was indeed his first formidable assumption of the visitatorial powers. He informed Father Gislebert that his directions were to obtain, before proceeding in any inquiry regarding the state of discipline and manners among them, an exact account of their revenues and wealth, in land, lordships, and ecclesiastical superiorities, oblations, legacies, and other devote offerings; in money, plate, and all other valuable effects; with a clear statement of the distribution and uses to which their vast havings were assigned. All which, having been treasurer of Westminster for so many years, he was the best qualified to estimate and declare.

Father Gislebert heard this command with a renewal of his shaking palsy, so that like the leaves of an aspen all his nerves seemed to be set trembling together at once. But, probably in accordance with a more craftily devised policy than any he would himself have acted upon, he scarcely murmured a remonstrance. If his reply began somewhat in that tone, it speedily shifted into one of assent and submission, with the exception that he entreated to be allowed

sufficient time in the task, as he was an old man, with a head somewhat dizzied for long reckonings, and the entire community were too much engaged in preparations for the approaching festival of their Royal Saint to render him assistance. Thereupon the almoner arose, and humbly proffered his services—addressing his offer so impartially between the visitor and treasurer that it would have been difficult to decide to which of the two he made it. "I have abundant leisure on my hands, and shall be but too happy if I am suffered to devote it to some serviceable purpose!—Brother Botolph, the subsacrist, can easily supply my place in feeding the filthy beggars and offscum that prowl about the abbey for the leavings of our repasts! And indeed my lord treasurer would have a weary toil of it, for he keeps all our accounts in tallies, after the ancient manner, and not in the Arabian numerals—wherein, though I boast but a scholar's skill, I can more readily than any other in our monastery reduce them." Roodspere with a smile signified his assent. But not so the treasurer. "Nay, brother Quodvultdeus!—I need not your aid—nor any man's—neither can any but myself decypher my tallies—which, God be praised, have always passed with full approbation of

our chapter—and which I keep in all security in the great treasury chest in the crypt! I will lose no diligence, master visitor, but I will have no helpers to tangle my worsted under pretext of winding the ball! And now, sith you have made your meal and it is a fast with me till noonday, shall I be your guide to do your adoration at St. Edward's shrine?"

"I purpose none!—adoration is due to Him only in whose presence the mountains bow their heads—none other!—and I have business that craves despatch more earnestly than any gratification of curiosity," said Roodspere, himself somewhat startled at the amazement produced by the first part of this declaration, the imprudence of which struck him after its utterance, for saint-worship was so established a portion of the ancient faith that to deny it seemed almost an open declaration of heretical opinion. Nevertheless he made no attempt at retractation, and also declining the offered attendance of Quodvultdeus, he quitted the refectory alone.

Those who followed him—and some there doubtless were, however unobserved by himself—had speedily occasion to report that he further took his way out of the precincts of the abbey itself, but not, as might have been sup-

posed, in the direction of York Place. Subsequent observers brought the news that he had taken a small sculler at the ferry below, and had ordered the boatman to convey him to the district in which Clerkenwell Nunnery was situated.

LIBRARY
UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS

CHAPTER XV.

CLERKENWELL.

Oh, how this spring of love resembleth
The uncertain glories of an April day,
That now shows all the beauty of the sun,
Anon, an envious cloud takes all away!

SHAKESPERE.

AT this period the river Fleet was navigable for such small craft as Roodspere had hired, feeling himself too much a stranger in the localities to trust to his own guidance by land, to a considerable distance beyond its junction with the Thames at Blackfriars. His Charon landed him, after running up a narrow creek, at a species of pier contrived for the purpose, built of massive but very ancient and decayed timbers, in the midst of a reedy little lake which the Fleet formed at the bottom of two steep hills covered with wood, and the houses of as many scattered villages. These hills, now become towering streets, still retain the names they bore in Roodspere's time—

Snow-hill and Holborn-hill—and the landing-place, under a group of alders and lofty oaks, retained what even in the sixteenth century was the antiquated derivative of the latter steep's title, in the designation of Old Bourne. From this point the scullerman pointed out to Roodspere the glitter of a weathercock over what appeared to be a distant dip in the woody uplands around, and informing him that it surmounted the chapel of the Nunnery of St. Mary of Clerkenwell, he received his fee, and left his fare to pursue the route thither in solitary meditation.

The district Roodspere now traversed, which nowadays, under the name of Clerkenwell, forms an integral part of the metropolis, has certainly sustained the most complete and disadvantageous change of all its divisions over which Time has since waved his slow dissolving-wand. He who in this noonday of the nineteenth century traverses Clerkenwell, finds himself in a haggard city of manufactories, prisons, narrow streets of ill-built houses, and tangled dirty lanes, inhabited by a swarming, poverty-stricken population. The public buildings are principally a vast jail, a sessions-house, and a church which seems like a petrified personification of its parochials, in its

disdain of all embellishment and order—its uncouth bulk and coarse materials. When Roodspere first arrived in this suburb, the stony expanse that still bears the abused name of Clerkenwell Green was what the word imports, and was surrounded by a pretty village inhabited by the vassalage and dependents of the three great ecclesiastical structures that divided all the surrounding territory among them. The nunnery — a gothic structure of remote antiquity—occupied the site of the present extremely modern parish church, enclosed by high walls, in a richly cultivated expanse of pleasure grounds, still called Clerkenwell Close. The magnificent palace of the Knights of St. John, of which a solitary gateway only remains—and the great Chartreux Monastery, corrupted in common parlance into the Charterhouse—were sumptuous edifices, within the range of a glance, and the only ones that interrupted the rural character of the whole surrounding scenery. The abrupt ascents and declivities of the present noisome streets and lanes still mark what in Roodspere's day were uplands of verdure and shade, traversed by a bright though narrow and winding stream, not then meriting the opprobrium attached in ours to the very

name of the Fleet, but deserving its own in the playful rapidity of its waters. Not then a foul subterranean sewer, churning a way in darkness beneath the foundations of dismal lanes and courts, and blind alleys, and toppling houses, which in sudden outbreaks of fury it sometimes undermines — but a clear stream meandering through meadows and woodlands under the azure vault of heaven only! Indeed throughout this district names suggestive of rural beauty and of the rich cultivation of conventual properties cling as if in mockery to the gloomiest haunts of toil and misery. Clerkenwell Green and Close—the Vineyard—Coppice Row—Saffron Hill—Mount Pleasant—the Well!—alack, how little do they now merit their pretty designations! The last—that famous spring which gave its name to the entire territory — is now a morose and melancholy pump, almost unknown and forgotten even amongst a population that has so much need of its services. Roodspere found it a plenteous fountain of pellucid water rising in the midst of a stone bason surmounted by a canopy, in which was a most ancient statue of the Virgin, holding the Sacred Child in her arms, which seemed sportively pressing its own sweet food from her bosom into the wave

below. And the tradition ran that formerly, on the festivals of the patroness of the neighbouring convent, the waters of the fountain were suffused as if with a milkiness—but even in the sixteenth century the miracle had long ceased. The natural amphitheatre around had also been long disused as the scene of the open-air performances of the mysteries and moralities for which the clerical re-inventors and actors of the drama had originally thought it so admirably adapted. The demand for scenic illusions more complete, and a more civilised susceptibility to weather influences, had transferred the theatres of these displays to the interior of churches and other great ecclesiastical enclosures.

The tranquillity and rural beauty of the scene were not altogether lost upon Roodspere, though he was harassed by internal reflections but little in accordance. A pure and cloudless sky brooded with the cushat's wing over the whole vicinage; something indescribably soft, tender, and caressing breathed in the air, cooed in the notes of the wood-pigeons, prattled in the murmurs of the rivulet, flitted in shadowy breezes over the velvety green of the swelling pastures around, and glittered on the brown but still lin-

gering leaves of the oaks. Roodspere knew not why it should be so, but of a sudden the carking thoughts that had pursued him so far fell like a burden from his heart, and he stepped forward with an eager and hopeful step, the moment he caught sight of the Nunnery towers. Thus fallaciously does fate flatter her victims, luring them into her gulfs with the bloom of flowers or the gleam of her golden unrealities deep down in the abyss!

All that Roodspere had known or heard of Prior Sancgraal up to this period had increased his suspicions of his real character, and his anxiety concerning the nature of the influence he had so obviously secured himself with the daughter of Sir Amias Paulet. If he was in reality the hypocritical sensualist there was so much reason to apprehend in him—what might not be dreaded on behalf of the innocent and beautiful girl whose absolute disposal he had so earnestly laboured to secure? But was it indeed certain that he had not already abused the ascendancy of his powerful intellect and will, and the opportunities afforded by the warmth of female enthusiasm, and the solitude of the confessional? If it had been so in the case of the

unhappy wife of Hunne—might it not be so now again with the orphan of the Paulets? Roodspere's own generous and pure heart and soul—his recollection of the virgin loveliness of look and word in all that Lily-Virgin said or seemed—her repulse of the magnificent temptations of the cardinal—supported him against this tormenting doubt. But still it was a doubt!—and one that he had resolved by every means in his power to clear.

But, on the other hand, what means had he of ascertaining the vital truth in this complexity? The powers of the confessional indeed were placed in his grasp, and the English Reformers had not yet adopted the conclusions which at a later period discarded its dread inquisitorial agencies from their system. Roodspere himself had yet to learn the dangers and nefarious influences of this rite ere, with the more advanced of the continental reformers, he rejected it also with the loathing and abhorrence of an honest man who finds himself in possession of the false keys and forcing irons of a burglar. But how could he use these powers his inexperience still deemed lawful so as to arrive at the core of the mystery whose solution had become the very enigma of existence to him? Should he

place this so seemingly spotless spirit on the rack of suggestion and polluted doubt? Should he trouble the depths of that transparent heart, and perhaps mistake the muddying of the guilty suspicions and questionings thus cast into it for filth and black sediment in its own pellucid sands?—These were the thoughts and apprehensions that tormented every step of his advance, until of a sudden all yielded to the one delicious and absorbing reflection that he was about to see their beautiful subject again!

Arriving at the Nunnery, Roodspere was admitted without any difficulty by the yeomen-porters who kept the gate, and shown into a handsome apartment called the Misericord, where lay guests usually awaited and exercised permission to converse with their relatives and friends among the nuns. This permit could only be granted by the prioress—and Roodspere sent in a polite request to be allowed to speak with Mistress Paulet, by command of the Cardinal. But he was much vexed after a long expectation, to find that Dame Juliana responded to the summons in person, and alone. The prioress was dressed with even more than her ordinary attention to the effect of her toilette, but she carried a

richly illuminated book of Hours in her hand, and a sand-glass half run down, as if she had been interrupted in a devote perusal.

Roodspere's reception by this high dame was so peculiarly gracious that for some minutes he was much embarrassed, and scarcely could find a means to introduce the real object of his visit to her notice. She overwhelmed him with thanks for the politeness and protection he had extended, she said, on the previous day, and expressed her sense of the favour of his present visit in a manner which forced him to conclude that she imagined it was a strictly personal compliment. He succeeded at last, as gently as possible, in undeceiving her on this point by renewing his application to see Mistress Paulet, alleging, with something of a faint blush, that he had certain commands of the Cardinal to execute with that youthful lady, his ward. Dame Juliana seemed by no means pleased with the explanation, and replied with great frigidity that the novice Lily was too ill to see any one —that she was in her cell—in her couch—that the Cardinal's grace had so fluttered and dashed her with his severity and terrible threats, that she had ever since been like one distraught with fear and perplexity! "Our

Lady grant that it may all end as it should—in a meet submission to his grace's most noble pleasure—and so we be all redeemed out of our infinite musing and tribulation!" continued the pious prioress. "For my part I have always laboured to bring about his high behests beyond even the care of mine own salvation—but I am thwarted on all hands, master visitor, and all my people are as it were bedazed and besotted, like buzzards to the fowler's torch, by Prior Sancgraal's preachments and dominion sway!—And they do threaten me marvellously if I obey not and follow in all their devices—and the Abbey is our Lord Superior—so I know not what to say or do, but am as it were a sparrow between two hawks!"

"You are freed from one at least henceforth, madame!—The cardinal legate has appointed me sole confessor and spiritual guide to your nunnery, and the prior and monks alike of Westminster are forbidden all further resort among ye!" returned Roodspere.

"O, blessed St. Eloy! O, christian clerk!—can this good news really be?" exclaimed the prioress, in a transport of joy. "Why then, how came my Lord Sancgraal—who ever

preaches the obedience of superiors to us poor women, as if it were the whole gospel in one word—how comes it that he is e'en now busy confessing and shriving our poor novice out of what little capability the cardinal's burning wrath left in her?—learning all forbidden secrets too of what passed between his grace and her!"

"Can this be so—and your novice, reverend mother! in her cell—in her very couch?" exclaimed Roodspere, aghast.

"Alas, reverend master! I pray you call me by no such titles of humility!—I am scarce worthy either in dignity of office or of years to be styled your sister—and now I am your poor penitent and submiss disciplinarian!" replied Dame Juliana; but observing the continued dismayed query in Roodspere's countenance, she added with some embarrassment, "But what said I?—In her couch, in her cell?—That were nothing strange, dan priest, I trow, for one to see her soul's physician where she must needs condescend to receive her bodily leech, when sickness chains her to the bed-ingle!—But yet our Lily is so silly a modest, nay-and-forsooth thing, that I deem she would scarce yield to take her *viaticum* in bed, though Death himself were the priest to bring it her!—And

now I remember me, Sister Barbara, who is mother of the novices, told me she had received the prior's orders to send the poor girl to her penitential devotions in the chapel-crypt, where we are only ordered for fright and punishment—as if she could help whatever chanced to her in York Place yesterday, or could refuse my lord cardinal's most special summons with the rest of us!"

"In the crypt of the chapel!—In an underground vault!" repeated Roodspere.

"'Tis my Lord Sancgraal's favourite confessional for us when we anger him!—And, indeed, I am right glad his day is over, for truly he is so hard to content that I fear me I have of late foregone the divine offices more than is for my soul's weal!—So if it please you, being our confessor now, I would fain examine my conscience for this last month or twain at your feet!"

"Not now, not now, my lady prioress!—Is there not risk that Sancgraal may be even at this instant compelling Mistress Paulet to incur the high penalty of the excommunication denounced by the cardinal, by revealing to him . . .? Madame, if you would shun far heavier disdain than any you have yet incurred

with his grace, lead me to Lily-Virgin's presence without delay, however brief!"

"It is against the rules to interrupt a prescribed devotion—but my lord legate's will is the land's law!" said the prioress, though with hesitation, as if she were balancing opposite dangers in her mind. "Well, master visitor, you must promise then to take me under your benevolence and protection and my lord legate's assurance, for well I wot there is a design to deprive me of mine office, among mine own sisterhood — and if I offend the lord prior—"

Roodspere interrupted the further expression of Dame Juliana's apprehensions by eagerly plighting his own and the cardinal's support in any possible ill result from her allegiance to the latter's lawful commands; and the prioress, somewhat surprised at his vehemence, nevertheless yielded to its impulse, and led the way from the Misericord into a corridor terminating in the chapel of the nunnery. It was a richly adorned and very beautiful little edifice, furnished with an altar, a choir, and all other conveniences of conventual devotion. Dame Juliana proceeded to the altar, before whose fine silver Madonna she threw herself prostrate, and after edifying Roodspere for

some minutes with the display of her devotion, she arose, and pointed out to him a door in a little side aisle, by which she informed him he could descend to the crypt. Then, as if unwilling to make any appearance in the conflict of authorities she anticipated, Dame Juliana hastened—with one or two backward glances—out of the chapel. But before the second, Roodspere had disappeared.

A flight of stone steps, revealed by the opening of the door indicated, winding like the rings of a corkscrew round a massive pillar, conducted the new confessor's rapid and unhesitating descent into the underground chapel or crypt of St. Mary of Clerkenwell. Light deserted him almost instantly, and he was compelled to adopt a more careful manner of progress, keeping his hand on the solid staff of the pillar to guide the doubtful wheel of his footsteps. This, rather than any effort of his own, was the cause why he arrived on the last stair of the flight without making any slip or sound that could announce his approach, and that he overheard the latter words of a confabulation whose interlocutors he instantly distinguished to be Prior Sancgraal and his penitent.

" My beauteous child, no!—My soul is set at rest on an assured anchorage now; and in

the name, and as it were in the very person of your celestial spouse, I accept your promises as irrevocable vows, the breach of which would make you the adulteress of God himself!—Of the King of Heaven and of earth!—which no repentance could ever obliterate—no, not all the countless tears of Marie Magdalen in the desart, outnumbering the dewdrops on the April hedges, ever wash out!" Sancgraal was saying.

"O, father! rather may my sweet Lord Jesu, who shed his heart's blood on the cruel spear for me, spread my bridal couch in this dark vault, than ever I yield to the cardinal's base lures! But do not thou desert me, father! for whom else have I in the world to look to for aid?" returned a weeping voice.

"Never, my best-beloved redeemed one! Never, while the persecutors suffer me to breathe this earthly air, which is so heavy on both our hearts!—Fear not that ever while this shattered vessel of the flesh still holds its planks against the storm, that a barque of refuge can be wanting to thee! But my ministrations must be secret as darkness in her deepest caves!—I have told you how nigh the wolves howl round the fold—what poison in a golden dish the cardinal has mingled now to

tempt your palate withal!—But I will assay all the spiritual food which shall pretendedly be thus offered you, and which you must instantly reject, and suffer in no wise to enter into your mind, lest eternal death ensue!—I shall oft be with thee in secret—but never for an instant will my heart be absent from the care and love of the snowiest lambkin of my flock, until I have guided her to browse on the golden mint and thyme of Heaven!—And thus, with the kiss of peace, I bid thee farewell, sweet child, and by proxy accept thee as the plighted bride of our glorious King and Lord!"

Roodspere emerged from the curve of the pillar too late to prevent the profanation, for so he deemed it, of this salute. A glance showed him Lily-Virgin kneeling at the feet of her astute confessor, in a recess of the gloomy chamber, receiving with meek and tremulous humility the pressure of those fevered lips which, touching her brows, seemed to leave the print of fire upon its virgin snows. He advanced with an indignant exclamation that startled both confessor and penitent—who arose with a simultaneous action on their feet.

The crypt was lighted only by loopholes of extraordinary depth in the walls of the foundations of the chapel, so narrow as to admit

only slanting beams rather of dusky twilight than any certain illumination, yet it sufficed to show that the intervals of the massive buttresses were piled with ancient coffins of lead or stone, and that, consequently, besides being a place of penitential recollection and devotion, this underground chapel was used as a sepulchre. This circumstance was probably supposed to exercise a salutary influence in promoting the state of mind essential to obtain those brief intervals of religious intoxication, or delirium, which beguiled the tedium of their fate to some of the more imaginative and enthusiastic victims. Sancgraal's natural gloom or craft had selected it for the chamber in which to erect his throne of the confessional—a wooden chair surmounted by a crucifix, and furnished with a lamp in the form of a scull, whose ghastly clenched teeth were carved in Gothic letters, with the words: God hears!

Roodspere advanced, and perceived with a sharp pang his inexperience did not allow him to fathom, that Lily-Virgin shrunk cowering back to the prior, who strode a step or two forward, to protect her. Without noticing this doubtful gesture, or indeed Sancgraal himself at all, Roodspere passed him with a hurried step, and presented himself before the heroine of

his previous day's adventure. "Lady, what do ye here," he exclaimed, "against the express commands—and under the direct penalties—of his grace the legate?"

Lily-Virgin glanced at the speaker with an expression in which terror was strangely, and to Roodspere, inexplicably, mingled with wonder and indignation that gave a richer lustre to those beautiful eyes he had last beheld half quenched in their own tears. Then she crossed herself as if against the presence of a fiend—and then snatching up a rosary at her girdle, began hurriedly repeating an Ave.

"Confession violates no ordinance of silence—the church's audience is as that of the universal presence which sees and knows all things, yet nothing reports—and under its seal only have I learned your cardinal's unhallowed but long suspected purposes!" now interposed the prior, in conciliatory tones. "But if, as I have also learned, Master Roodspere, you did courageously and truly—and under no simulated understanding with your wicked patron—interfere on behalf of this orphan lady—you will rather rejoice that I should be at hand to aid you in your work of preservation!"

"Methought, lord prior, you clearly read and understood the order that you should cease

your visitation and office in this nunnery?' returned Roodspere, with extreme coldness.

"Even so—and now am I come hither to announce my deprivation—and to recommend yourself as my successor, to the submission and reverence of this blameless sisterhood!" replied Sancgraal, meekly.

"I am bounden to you, sir, and you set them a good example in your own disdain of my lawful authority!" said Roodspere. "But I must find a remedy for this, and, as my powers as visitor are of pure discretion, henceforth I ordain, that being a cloistral monk, you shall abide within your precincts, and no longer stray hitherward on any business or pretext!"

Sancgraal glanced at the speaker while this decree was promulgated with the look of a gladiator about to measure his strength in mortal conflict with another. But the Minerva that of old restrained even the ferocious passions of the irascible son of Peleus, controlled any open demonstration of the prior's sentiments.

"I go then—to my cloister!" he said, in tones of bitter resignation. "But I will still hope, until worse proof hap to the contrary, that you hold your immortal soul at a dearer

price than to sell it to win the favour of any earthly supremacy! Fail not to remember all I have taught thee, my daughter!" he concluded with emphasis, "And now I commend thee to God's holy keeping only, for I must hence!"

"Tarry in this noisome sepulchre while you will—it is, perchance, a fitting resort! But for you, lady, come forth into the pure bright sunshine which is your congenial element, and I will convince you that I mean you no such disloyalty—as perchance you have been taught to think!" said Roodspere, extending his hand—and melting into tears, but with an implicitness that smote to the depths of Sancgraal's turbid heart in turn—she placed hers in it; and bending sorrowfully and reverently as she passed him, suffered herself to be led by Roodspere out of the charnel crypt.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE RIVAL CONFESSORS.

The one did plete on the Pope's side,
A Griffon of a grim stature;
A Pellicane withouten pride,
To these Lollars ylayed his lure.
CHAUCER'S "PLOWMAN'S TALE."

ROODSPERE returned to Westminster from his visit to Clerkenwell, a sadder, but doubtless, in some degree, a wiser man, inasmuch as he was more fully aware of the artifices and dangers with which he had to contend, in that flowery field wherein his first struggle with the monks seemed concentrated. His visit was an unusually prolonged one, lasting indeed the daylight out; for after a long open-air conference with Lily-Virgin, he accepted the prioress's pressing invitation to dine in the nunnery, imagining that the whole of the community would share the repast with them. But Dame Juliana, under plea of languid and uncertain appetite, had introduced a very un-

conventual custom of making her meals alone, or in such company, and at such hours, as best pleased herself. Roodspere made his escape with some difficulty from a long *tête-à-tête*, to which he consequently found, greatly to his surprise and vexation, he was consigned by his acceptance.

All he saw and heard in this interview with the Prioress Juliana increased his conviction of the perilous inadequacy of the guardianship to which the orphan of Sir Amias Paulet was to look for protection from so many and opposing dangers. However decently veiled, he could not doubt the prioress's private conviction of the true nature of Wolsey's designs; and as she evidently proceeded on the supposition that he himself was to be employed as a secret agent in forwarding them, he was shocked at the readiness she evinced to lend her support. She promised all obedience to the order to exclude Sancgraal and his emissaries from the nunnery, and entreated him to come daily, and endeavour by his arguments and persuasions to remedy the failure of her own in weaning the novice from her projects of immolation. At the same time she expressed so much disgust and bitterness at her proper condition, even as superior of a wealthy

foundation, that credit might have been given her for charity in her politic co-operation. But she had other and extraneous grounds of complaint to allege. She had been compelled to enter the cloister against her inclinations, by the rapacity and ambition of her relatives, who possessed an influence with the monks of Westminster which they desired to use in the establishment of a daughter. Yet, according to Dame Juliana, her elevation had been a source of continual discomfort and struggle to herself, as an organized plot existed to deprive her of even that recompense for her seclusion, in her own nunnery, headed by Sister Barbara, who aspired to fill the dignity from which she projected her overthrow. This withered crone, the prioress feelingly declared to be the inventress and propagator of all the scandals against herself, and certain other of the nuns, which had given the Legate's Court such a handle against her, designing thereby to justify her sinister projects. In conclusion, Dame Juliana offered, if supported against attempts of this nature, to give her unreserved adhesion to the Cardinal's goodwill and pleasure, and reject the usurpation which had hitherto compelled her in a contrary course.

This glimpse into conventual intrigues was

sufficiently painful; but it left scarcely any impression on Roodspere's mind in comparison with the sorrowful results of the analysis to which he was irresistibly compelled to subject the mind of Lily-Virgin. Without alarming her with the direct form of a confession — himself perhaps instinctively repudiating the unhallowed spells at his command — in fact, in the course of a walk in the convent grounds, to which, in strong contrast with his predecessor's sepulchral predilections, he invited her; he yet gathered enough from Lily-Virgin's timorous admissions, and attempted refutations of his hinted apprehensions, to be convinced that Sancgraal had established himself an empire over her imagination and credulity likely to resist the most potential efforts of reason and argument. Her inmost soul was kneaded with his opinions: so artfully had he grafted his superstitions in her mind, that their fruitage seemed the natural growth of the tree. And in so many instances the hues and scents of these aliens were compounded of such beautiful and hallowed essences, that, apples of the Dead Sea as they were, they seemed to boast the loveliest and balmiest qualities of those of Paradise!

Like all confessors of ability who aspire to

spiritual domination, Prior Sancgraal found the materials of his cup of sorcery in the constitution, physical and moral, of his victim. He had persuaded the timid and sensitive orphan girl that the fear and reluctance she felt to mingle in the turbulent movement of the world, was a secret call from Heaven for her to devote herself to it in retirement. The terror and anxiety infused by Wolsey's pursuit, stood in contrast with the exquisite serenitude and peace Sancgraal set before her, with all the charms of his extraordinary eloquence and imagination, as portions of the lot he urged on her acceptance. It was as the murmur of a remote water to a thirsty wretch bewildered among ghastly ravines and precipices! His poetical power of expression enabled him to give the most splendid hues of reality to the visions he conjured up; and what indeed of allurement could even the gorgeous cardinal offer in competition with the sun-built palaces of heaven—the ever-blooming gardens of paradise—where the deified representative of all that is most engaging in tenderness, in suffering, and in glory, to the heart of woman, awaited to welcome his votaress in an eternal ruition of joy and happiness? The vague warmth of feeling natural to the dawn of the

passions in the purest breast, the imaginative and mystical tendencies in the mind of a young and secluded girl, Sancgraal had with great skill concentrated on this celestial rival, whose pre-eminence even the saturnine fury of cloistral passion might tolerate without too keen a pang. But to Roodspere's already intensely apprehensive observation it occurred that the visionary enthusiasm filling Lily-Virgin's mind and heart, was destined finally to take some more material form than the ecstatic contemplation of a superhuman Lord! It was evident every art had been exhausted to infuse into her the notion that Sancgraal was a saint of heroic and even miraculous virtues, raised by heaven for the defence of the menaced Church! In the dazzling radiance that flooded the pedestal before which her adoration bowed, it would not perhaps be difficult, in the end, to substitute so luminous a figure as that of the visible champion of the church even for its all-glorious but invisible chief! A passion, however trascendental, discoursed of, pleaded and enforced in the most eloquent and glowing language of terrestrial love and desire, might—so Roodspere reasoned—were the victim once secured, be brought by imperceptible grada-

tions to cajole the senses also into a dangerous participation!

The only consolation derived from this view of the extraordinary dominion acquired by Sancgraal over the mind of his penitent, was, that he could scarcely have misused his influence as yet in any but a spiritual sense. A contrary supposition was hardly compatible with the exalted reverence visibly entertained for the prior by Lily-Virgin, and the simplicity and candour that appeared in all she said and did. In that belief Roodspere was but too desirous to acquiesce, though his inquietude was deepened by the fact that his transferred penitent timorously alleged, as if dreading his investigation, that she was confessed and shriven up to the moment of his arrival, and had not therefore committed any offence whereof she could accuse herself to him. Moreover, he gathered that Sancgraal had found it necessary, even aided as he was by dread of the cardinal's designs, to infuse the tremendous notion into her that the sacrifice of her existence in the cloister was the only efficient means of redeeming her beloved parent's spirit from the penal sufferings he had incurred by the heretical taint of his opinions in life! The compassion and self-devotion of the tender-

hearted novice were thus evoked by the most powerful agencies; and to dissuade her from the course she was on seemed to counsel the most barbarous of parricides.

But not only these mighty difficulties guarded and trenched and pitfalled every step of Roodspere's advance; he found himself placed in an invidious and evidently, in Lily-Virgin's now prejudiced view, base and tyrannical office. The craft of his antagonist and the unhappy involution of circumstances, he felt, placed him in the light of an abettor of his patron's flagitious schemes, in all the efforts he could make to counteract those of Prior Sancgraal. Every word which he uttered in this sense more painfully satisfied him on the point: the consternation, the shrinking, the tears of Lily-Virgin needed no formula of language to aid in the expression of her sentiments! Not only so, but he also perceived that she was primed with distrust of all he said, on another score, and that already the dread intimation had been made to her that he was of the order of men whose heresies were bringing down the wrath of God on that whole generation of mankind, and had consigned her sire to his hideous doom of expiation!

Nevertheless, he entered on the task he had

assigned himself with a courage and resolution only the strongest motives could have prompted and sustained. And Lily-Virgin listened at first with terror—even with horror—to the reasoning of a priest who asserted the very groundwork of her purposes was in delusion and error—that there was no salvation, no redemption, to be hoped from human works, or prayers, or sacrifice! Yet still she listened! His gentle manner and musical tones—the earnestness that animated all he said—his engaging and spiritual countenance—won irresistibly on her attention, in spite of every contrary prejudice. Truth and sincerity are still effective to win belief, confused and rendered doubtful as they are by the simulations of hypocrisy and treachery—and irresistibly these, on Roodspere's tongue, gained upon the novice's credence. Himself had never yet imagined he possessed the eloquence and force of persuasion some novel power lent to his accents while he laboured to set before the beauteous novice the unstable nature of the reasoning on which her choice of the cloister was founded—the danger and temptations to which a seclusion so unnatural was liable! By what transitions, imperceptible even to himself, did he pass into the impassioned peroration of his discourse

wherein he expounded to the wondering novice the true purposes of heaven in her creation—the rights she abdicated—the privileges of existence she cast aside for a dream! Were the tender affections she was endowed with, he vehemently argued, created only, like unpropped honeysuckles, to ramp in the dust and be trampled out of all their dewy sweetness there? He painted the desolation and joylessness of human existence deprived of the universal weld with God and nature which Love, with all his holy train of kinships, supplies! He painted it vividly, for it was in the colours of his own heart's blood! He, too, was alone—he, too, was condemned to the solitude of feeling and existence he deprecated as the destiny of the youthful Lily of the Virgin! She wept as he described his own forlorn condition and prospects, and learned to pity herself in him! Or what was the sentiment dwelling in her gentle bosom when finally she consented to see and hear him as often as he could spare time to come to Clerkenwell, on the subject thus eloquently discussed, even while tearfully protesting she could never change her resolve?

The result of Roodspere's inquisition might fairly be summed up in his report to Cromwel

when they met again:—"She is as pure as light, if she be as superstitious as darkness!"

"Hath she confessed so much?" said Cromwel, with a slight sneer. "Why, then, I am confirmed in my notion that our Italian songster is the true key of the mystery! But, as you say, or said, methinks, we must move cautiously! Gardiner has the upper hand of us for one while again!—for his grace sends word he would have you apply yourself unintermittedly to the duties of your office, until he comes to see you here in person. In plain English, you are not to come to York Place until you are sent for—the devil take his own thence, and the sooner the better!"

Though painfully struck by this decree of banishment from Wolsey's presence, Roodspere made no comment, and his ideas seemed to turn immediately to another topic. "Master Cromwel, I begin to think in some sort as you do, and will apply my best endeavour to search into the mystery of the præcentor's presence in the abbey! If he be aught of what we must dread to find in him, I will hope, by exhortation and reasoning, so to set the sinfulness and danger of his soul's estate before him, as to win him to repentance and

open avowal of the prior's enormities! If it may be, indeed, that the corrupting influence of his corrupt faith has made Sancgraal so deep a criminal!"

"Ay, let us hope," said Cromwel, with a smile, "that even in a monastery the fiend's power is limited!"

CHAPTER XVII.

THE ABBEY CHURCH.

Into the inmost temple then I came.
SPENSER.

AND yet several days elapsed before Roodspere, absorbed in his more congenial and engrossing task in Clerkenwell, could find leisure or opportunity to pursue any researches respecting the Italian choirmaster. The latter appeared in none of the accustomed haunts of the general community, and the almoner informed him he had adopted an unusual degree of seclusion even for his habitually unsociable and solitary manners—making his appearance in the choir only, at the necessary periods of his duty as præcentor. Roodspere himself had, however, some notion that he had caught several glimpses of him since his arrival, on other occasions, for he had not yet shared the conventual devotions, or, in fact, entered the church at all, unwilling to be subjected to the espial of the monks,

and the report they would thence be enabled to make of his want of reverence for their favourite superstitions.

But at last, urged by Cromwel and weighty circumstances, he determined to endeavour opening some degree of intercourse with the sweet singer of Westminster. With this view, about a week after his arrival, he made his way, for the first time, into Westminster Abbey Church, at the hour when the daily service of the high mass was nearly concluded —making his entrance, not from the private adit of the monks, opening into the Cloisters, but from the one in common use in the west front of the building.

The ancient possessors of the Abbey of Westminster were not so insensible as their reformed inheritors have shown themselves to the architectural effects designed by the builders of its magnificent church. At present we are compelled to sneak in at a paltry side door, and take our first view of the interior from a point that reverses all the great effects of its prodigious area and immense perspectives, and the wonderful combinations of the masses of the building at the cross. It is not until we have strolled the whole length of the edifice, from Poets' Corner, to the opposite

extremity of the nave, and turn from the now hermetically sealed western porch, that we discern we have been admitted at the wrong end, and that hitherto our backs have been turned on the true and stupendous line of approach from the barred entrance there! A forest glade of pillars then opens before us, and we retrace the ideal which, whether by accident or design, seems always to have haunted the imagination of Gothic architecture—the towering vistas of the druidical temples of our ancestors, in the depths of the immemorial forests of the north!

Westminster Abbey still presents one of the most stupendous of Gothic interiors—it is a plain, a forest, a sky of stone! And at the period of our narrative, its vast proportions were unbroken. The lofty screens that now divide its area almost as completely as if into separate churches, were not yet permitted to destroy the immensity of the perspectives of the nave and transept, with their aerial intercolumniation. The magnificence the building is entitled to derive from its own vastness was displayed in the most striking and imposing amplitude, in the vista which extended from the western entrance to the extremity of the apsis in the semicircle of chapels sur-

rounding the Shrine of the Confessor. The most remote spectator throughout this vast line of approach could discern every portion of the ceremonials enacted on the high altar, beyond the transept, and keep his soul refreshed with the sight of the glorious tabernacle of the saint, glowing in sombre magnificence, like a sunset, in the extreme point of the perspective. The vast and strongly defined body of a cross the building, from the openness of its configuration, should offer to the eye, was thus, in Roodspere's time, sublimely delineated in the stupendous masses of light that met in the transept, and formed a Titanic emblem of the faith in whose honour the edifice was consecrated. And the upper part of this colossal cross of transparent adamant—such the fixed brightness appeared—like the head of Him whose redeeming torment it typified, seemed surrounded by a glory in the effulgence streaming from the windows of the centripetal chapels environing St. Edward's shrine.

The entire church then possessed the true colouring of Gothic architecture. Every window of the countless number admitting the light was stained with more colours than ever Iris displayed, all storied with the legendary

history of the pile. Instead of the plain glass which now, like the Reformation that substituted it for the gorgeous illusions it destroyed, admits the light in its simplicity as it falls from heaven; an effulgence of colours streamed from every pictured pane. Saints and kings, martyrs and triumphant apostles, in dazzling robes, angelic forms representing the whole celestial hierarchy, crowded the atmosphere with a realization of the visions of a Miltonic imagination—such a pomp as might fill the vestibules of heaven on some great day of celestial festivity. Resplendent hosts watched over all the numerous chapels and shrines. The lives and sufferings of the saints, composing the poetical though credulous mythology of the Middle Ages, were delineated with all possible force of colouring, for the sun himself held a blazing torch to the transparent canvass! In that rainbow-hued illumination the clustered pillars glowed like the columns in a hall of the genies. Jasper and gold, coral and silver, marbles of ruby and amethyst—of a million opal hues—seemed to compose the materials of the edifice; and at times, when an extraordinary lustre of noonday fired the church, the whole interior blazed like some cavern of lustrous

crystallization, in the glare of torches. The galleries, now so dusty and dark you can hardly see there are any, glowed like rich cabinets of jewellery in the glory of their deep-set illuminations. The loftiest ornament of the vaulted roof, the minutest carving and efflorescence in the masonry and capitals of the pillars, was struck into full relief by the extraordinary affluence of this kaleidoscope light, so admirably arranged that the massive walls seemed scarcely to offer an obstruction. The roses in the centres of the lofty groins themselves shone like flowers filled with golden brightness!

The nave was not yet the disfurnished hall of a palace whose glories have for ever passed away. The commissioned pillagers of Henry VIII. had not yet been there, nor the troopers of Cromwell; the Reformation had not yet levied her distraint on the goods of her bankrupt predecessor. Or has she succeeded but as the impoverished heir of a great mansion, who has no means to furnish it, no use for its great chambers of hospitality, and who resides in a small apartment of the palace, allowing strangers (for a gratuity!) to wonder at the desolation at their leisure? But it is true; the simple forms of Protestantism have no

uses for those extended lines of space essential to the display of the grand spectacles in which the Catholicism of Rome, like the paganism it borrowed so much from without acknowledgment, luxuriates. But at this period of the reign of the monasticlast Henry, the Abbey Church of Westminster enjoyed all the accessories that could add splendour to its native sublimity. The nave was peopled with the statues of the founders and benefactors of the abbey—saintly kings and kingly saints, whose illustrious phantoms filled innumerable niches along the lines of the walls they had raised, and thus in person attested the gratitude of the religious of Westminster, and reminded them of their duty to pray for their souls through all the generations of time! The spaces behind were emblazoned in the fantastic heraldry of the middle ages with arms, and surmounted by scrolls of the names and titles of the great personages represented below. The walls of churches were the Debretts and Burkes of those days! And no ill substitute for the tattered drapery of sepulchral inscriptions and hanging tombstones that disfigures so much of the space in modern times! Or else the walls were adorned with paintings, very præ-Raffaelesque and grotesque in de-

sign, but most gorgeously coloured and gilded. Portraits of kings and heroes, representations of strange miracles, or of horrible forms of martyrdom, were the principal subjects; the latter delineated with a sombre sincerity, expressive as much of the monastic artist's own impassioned credulity as of the marvellous or dreadful events depicted. All works of eras of rude but solemn and believing art, they were, and in the key of the stupendous Hosanna in stone, which the Gothic cathedral enclosing them might be said to present in itself, or to chaunt through the vasty organ-pipes of its reverberating aisles.

What might be called the furniture of the church was then also in harmony with the Gothic spirit and meaning of its architecture. Its massive sculptured fonts, fashioned as if to hold the giant infants of the primeval creation; its numerous altars and dedicated shrines, rich with devotional offerings, and each attended by its kneeling servitors and worshippers, its pulpits covered with the most delicate and elaborate devices, or the wildest freaks of grotesque imagination—its holy-water basins exhibiting a still more wonderful display of ingenuity and fancy, in every variety of metal, stone, and wood—all bore the stamp of the

mediæval art of which they might be said to be the foliage and flowering. The numerous small chapels set round the main body of the church—several of which have disappeared—enjoyed each its own magnificence while contributing to the general effect. Each had its altar, each its decorations, like a miniature church. The beautifully wrought screens, covered with sculptured legends, divided the chapels but not the area of the church: even the monks' seats in the choir were carefully subordinated to the line of vision, and set in far divisions so as not to break the vista to the high altar. The monuments and tombs, many of them already ancient as the monarchy itself, and more ancient than the edifice whose foundations were kneaded with their owners' illustrious clay, were as yet all of congruous Gothic design and fashioning. That disordered sculpture gallery which has since been accumulated in the aisles of Westminster Abbey—those masses of Egyptian, Grecian, Roman, Elizabethan statuary, and modern imitations of all, did not yet deform and choke its stately chambers and corridors! The chaotic resurrection, the attitudinizing tricks of modern art have heaped within its walls in our day, did not yet distort and weary the

contemplation! Under their canopies, chiselled elaborately as goldsmiths' chasings, in the fitting recumbency of death—still robed, crowned, armed in complete steel, sworded, sceptred, mitred, and spurred, as if they had yielded in the fulness of life and action, nobly and without discomposure to the great destroyer—lay the sepulchral effigies of the mighty ones whom the sculptors of the middle ages had deemed worthy to share the imperial state of death within those august precincts. Peter has robbed Paul to little advantage, indeed, in the heterogeneous crowds of pagan sculpture which have since jostled one another into every hole and corner of the Abbey Church of St. Peter of Westminster! —for they might have peopled the classical solitude of St. Paul's with a degree of congruity and appropriateness. As it is, the Last Day can scarcely assemble a wilder confusion of sleepers from the universal bed of the earth than the memorials huddled together on those dusty pavements now present. Crusaders and inventors of the steam-engine are certainly in strange company, cheek by jowl!

But even now, after the long daylight poured into its aisles, with all that flaunting presence of modern renovation and garish

ornament, the Gothic spirit is not exorcised out of the sombre shadows of Westminster Abbey. The sensuous religion that founded still haunts its aisles and deserted shrines, lingers in every chapel—glides duskily through the gloom of pillar and arch—and will not away! It triumphs over the glare of new marble, over the populace of incongruous sculpture—over the piled mausoleums that fill the places of its obliterated altars—looks sorrowfully over the hideous entablatures—derides the Roman heroes, falling in the arms of the pagan Victories, in their togas and sandals—jeers at the tall upright Grecian matrons standing haughtily on pedestals in their snowy robes—defies even the periwigs of the Georges—to banish it! The power of the architecture descends like a spell on the least imaginative beholder, and will own no other lord than the departed faith that planned, adorned, and had uses for every nook and cranny of the space. The ghost of a dethroned though guilty majesty seems to linger in the halls of a successor vainly endeavouring to cheer himself with a throng of unaccustomed guests! The simple forms of the protestant ritual seem as out of place in Gothic Westminster as a quaker in the throne of a mediæval

king! For ourselves we never traverse those vasty aisles without expecting momently to behold the shadow of some Prior Sancgraal darken the gloom of the black archways and vaulted recesses—or the muffled form of an ancipital Dan Gloria brush past us with his gleaming eyes and couchant steel!

Such was the influence of the spectacle, or of early habits, that even Roodspere mechanically bowed when his eye rested on the distant golden glow of the Confessor's shrine. But in his time the illusions of the fascinating superstition of Rome had but just begun to be dispelled, and something of the awe diffused by the visible divinities of paganism haunted this temple of humanity deified. A moment's recollection restored him to himself, and smiling, though somewhat sadly, at his own weakness, he advanced with slow steps along the magnificent line of approach, unwilling to join in the throng he observed engaged in the great devotion of the day in the transept. He was aware that the service was not yet concluded, for the distant choir was in full chant; and he therefore advanced the more leisurely, listening intently to try if he could distinguish Dan Gloria's voice. But the harmonious uproar of the full choir, with its organs and

other minstrelsy, intoning the Gregorian chant, and swelling to the lofty roof of the church with the simultaneous heave, or sinking to its base with the fall, of the wind-driven waves, prevented him at first from clearly ascertaining the fact. Meanwhile new subjects of attention encountered his observation at every step. The prodigious height of the vaultings over the nave, stretching away in a seemingly interminable avenue of arched brightness, struck his upward gaze with astonishment. Roodspere was no fine-art dilettante, but his admiration was necessarily awakened contemplating the aisles of lofty pillars with their graceful clustered forms—the wonderful art which has arranged them in such numbers but elegantly as a dance of the nymphs, so that the intercepted light seems but a silvery woof fluttering around them, and the lines of the perspective everywhere float off in a species of visual music from the gaze. The great windows of the nave, emblazoning as they did the entire history of the pile, legendary and actual, presented a kind of illuminated tale-book to the curiosity of a stranger. The series commenced with St. Peter telling his beads, as a grisly hermit, in the Thorny Isle of Westminster; and passed

thence through the chief events, miraculous and historical, attending the progress of the church, to the days of the Confessor and those of its later rebuilders, Kings Henry III. and VII. St. Peter was the hero of most of these delineations, as was but fitting in a church dedicated to him and by him—attended constantly by his reproach and honour, the cock, in full crow. The saint's second appearance in these storial panes was in the act of converting the British king, Lucius, to Christianity —overlooking the slight anachronism of the intervening three or four centuries, which must have rendered St. Peter somewhat infirm for his task. But a good consequence ensued, for in the next vitrifaction the Apostle was represented comfortably reclining on a golden cloud, and listening to a devote Gratias from King Lucius, at prayers in the church of his dedication, and which fitted the monarch almost as closely as the white of an egg its yolk. In the next range of glass St. Peter's mood was greatly changed, and he was appearing in wrath, with his cock yelling with indignation on his shoulder, to a throng of Roman soldiers, in Norman panoply, who were busied in the destruction of the holy king's foundation. Diocletian's persecution, it ap-

peared, extended into Britain—and the saint's interference was evidently in vain, for the next limning represented him wringing his hands from the skies in despair over the temple of Apollo that arose on the ruins of King Lucius's church. But not unobserved by a royal pagan who was seen standing in the temple, gazing with amazement at the prodigy, and letting a bull go which he was bringing by the horns for sacrifice. King Sebert by name, the destined second founder of the West Minster.

The memory of this monarch was justly dear to the whole monastic body, for it was he who invited and received the first monks into Britain, in the persons of St. Augustine and his twelve companions. Several windows were dedicated to his achievements. In the first he was engaged in the destruction of the usurping pagan temple—in another he stood in the porch of his new foundation, so tall that he could not have entered it if he had bent double—courteously welcoming St. Augustine and his brethren, in their monkish weeds, coming like so many drenched seals, on their hind legs, from the sea! In this pious prince's reign, St. Peter conferred the crowning act of the favour he so perseveringly exhibited for his church in Westminster. It was scarcely

in consonance with the reputed humility of his character, but the saint deigned to consecrate Sebert's church in person—to himself! Accordingly he was next exhibited embarking at Lambeth in the boat of Ederic, the fisherman, to be rowed over the river. On first thoughts there seemed no particular reason for the Apostle's landing in Lambeth, when his errand lay on the other side of the water. But it appeared in a subsequent glass picture, where St. Peter, wrapped in a huge blue blanket, swelling into sails in a strong wind, was crossing the river in a boat of transparent amber, surrounded by a thronging multitude of open-gilled salmon and other fishes, seeming only anxious to be caught. Mindful of his old craft and associations, the fisher of men was giving his noted promise to him of the Thames, that as long as he and his fraternity continued to pay duly a tithe of all they caught in the river before Westminster, salmon and trout should never cease to abound in it. The Reformation has deprived poor moderns of the benefits of this promise—but then it has also diminished the number of fasts so much as to render it the less necessary!

The second destruction of the church by Sebert's relapsed sons—its rebuilding by King

Edgar, under the orders of his imperious protector, St. Dunstan—its conflagration by the Danes, and the miracle of the vivified ravens on their standards, which affrighted them into retreat—formed the subjects of various succeeding tableaux—concluding at last with the vision of St. Edward. In this the holy founder of the modern structure was represented receiving absolution from his vow of going on a pilgrimage to Rome, from St. Peter himself, who in a long Gothic inscription, in letters of gold, informed the king of the condition of his release. And this was the building of the church and Abbey of Westminster. And then St. Edward appeared holding a baby church in his hand, and receiving St. Peter's instructions to build it in the form of a cross—the first of the shape.

Some time before Roodspere reached this point he had satisfactorily distinguished the voice of Dan Gloria in the choir. It was not easy to mistake its rich and pellucid tones for any other—and he somewhat hastened his steps to make sure of not missing him at the conclusion of the mass. At the same time he desired not to call any general attention to his movements, and he kept himself secluded behind the last mighty pillars of the north

aisle, where it debouches in the cross. From this point he could observe, without being observed—the whole congregation kneeling with their backs to him and their faces towards the high altar and shrine. They kneel to one another now! The champion of the new opinions was not surprised to observe that the congregation consisted chiefly of two classes—the nobles and retinue of the neighbouring palace, and the dependents rural and sanctuarised, of the monks. Absorbed in the pleasures of a most magnificent court, and under the control of a monarch and a priest whose despotic tempers were believed to be alike devoted to the conservation of the ancient order of things, the English nobility had as yet shown little or no inclination to imitate the example set them by their German peers—while gratitude and superstition enchained the agricultural population and refugees of Westminster firmly to their monkish lords. With these two classes of ignorant and luxurious personages, the dazzling pomp and sensuous delights of the scene and ritual observances they shared drowned all considerations of any abstract questions of reason and religion involved.

The high altar before the Confessor's shrine, was in itself a wonder of riches and splendour

—indeed the whole elevated recess in which it stood literally blazed with magnificent ornament. The altar was formed of plates of silver and gold, set with precious stones, and finely chased in relief, representing events in the legendary life of St. Edward. Twelve colossal statues of the apostles figured as gold candelabra on it, around a crucifixion of the same wealthy material; above which a perpetual amber glory seemed to ooze still upward to the very summits of the vaultings overhead, from the golden glow and illumination of the chapel of the shrine. The elevated plateau of the chapel itself, and the height of the feretory on which the superb sarcophagus of the saint was placed, rendered the shrine an apex of vision from every point of the cross and nave—farther concentrated by the cataracts of refulgence, poured in from the great east window over the horseshoe semi-circle of the chapels surrounding that of the Confessor. The fretted pinnacles of the screen between the altar-place and the chapel of St. Edward, were then richly gilded, and flamed like torches—but vainly illumined the mystical splendours of the hieroglyphical pavement of Abbot Ware below. The two great windows of the north and south transept—the rose and

the marigold—lent but little assistance in such a task. They were "dark with excess" of gorgeousness in the colours of the grand illuminations the artist had used to delineate the proudest event in the history of the abbey—its miraculous consecration by St. Peter. A prodigious blaze of sun-flushed colouring almost realized the monastic vision of the Prince of the Apostles, attended by a concourse of all the celestial hierarchy, celebrating the holy rite in the depths of midnight, in the sole human presence of the fortunate fisherman, Ederic!

Reverting from the contemplation of what he considered the heathen magnificence of this scene, Roodspere's gaze sought for the more immediate object of his quest. He perceived two long rows of monks, with their cowls drawn over their faces, seated in the choir, in raised compartments of black oak. The novices, servitors, and choristers sate on benches below them; but he could not distinguish Dan Gloria among either party. The anthem had also ceased, and his voice was no longer audible to guide observation. In his anxiety to ascertain what had become of him, Roodspere stretched beyond the shadow of his pillar, and earnestly scanned the latter

group, while the congregation began to disperse, and the monks entered the nave chaunting in procession, on their return to the cloister. But suddenly his gaze was caught by the glance of a pair of luminous eyes from the gallery on the opposite side to that beneath which he stood, gleaming like a jack-a-lantern for a moment over his face, and then vanishing in the arches overhead. Roodspere almost involuntarily made a gesture of summons in that brief flash of recognition—but whether it was observed or responded to he could not tell.

In some expectation that it might nevertheless be so, Roodspere lingered in the transept until nearly the whole throng of worshippers had retired. By degrees his ideas wandered from this subject of conjecture to more absorbing reflections, suggested by all he beheld, on the difficulties presented by so engaging and magnificent a superstition in the way of those who believed themselves commissioned to restore the purity of evangelic religion among the enthralled nations. His steps strayed also, scarcely with his own cognisance, though he had some general notion that it would be as well not to be observed in apparent expectation of any arrival. It was

thus that he found himself speedily in the south cross of the transept, in that part which has since been constituted Death's Cage of Nightingales, under the name of Poets' Corner. He had paused to contemplate the tomb of Chaucer—not the one that now bears the name, but a more ancient and defaced Gothic monument that occupied the same site. As a man of letters, but still more as a reformer, Roodspere looked with interest and respect at this memorial, and while marvelling that the monks had ever admitted that disciple of Wicliffe to the shelter of their walls, he thought he discovered later and vengeful hands at work in the dilapidation of a monument which was shattered in so many parts, yet was scarcely a century old. He was recalling to his mind some lines of the bard's controversy between the Pelican and the Griffon, when suddenly he heard footsteps, and distinguished the murmuring melody of a voice which he instantly knew to be Dan Gloria's, who approached singing in a sweet undertone, as if to himself:—

"Sleep'st thou or wak'st thou, Childe Eland,
While gather thy foes around?
Sleep'st thou or wak'st thou, sweet Blancheflour,
And the tell-tale day above ground?

"Dawns not the day, love, dear love mine!
The day so silvery bright?—
No! but thy sweet eyes are beaming,
And seem like the break of the light!

"Stilly, as autumn leaves rustle,
They throng round the lady's bower!—
Skylark! go sing at the lattice,
And waken betrayed Blancheflour!"

The præcentor advanced, amusing himself with this ditty, apparently in a deep revery, with his arms folded on his breast, and his visage, as usual, closely muffled in his hood. But Roodspere remarked the vernacular purity of the English the songster now permitted himself to use; and perceiving that he seemed to purpose making his exit at the obscure side-door, now esteemed the proper entrance to the entire edifice, he advanced to meet him. The præcentor's revery was, however, so profound, that, as if accidentally, he brushed somewhat roughly against him, and then paused to apologise. "Give me grace, reverend clerk," he said, resuming his foreign manner and pronunciation, "it is mine haste to obey your will makes me thus rude, for meseemed I saw you, whom they tell me we of Westminster are all bound to homage and serve, give me a sign to present myself before you?"

"I need some familiar of this abbey to accompany me round the shrines, of which I purpose to take an inventory—but the monks themselves are churlishly disposed," said Roodspere, with some hesitation.

"And you have not said the worst of them therein, master visitor!" returned the præcentor, with acrimony. "Natheless," he added, after a pause, "if your devotion purposes for the shrine of blessed Edward, I cannot accompany you thither. Until my penance is accomplished, I may not present me within his golden shadow, where also Father Gislebert is now keeping his Vigils of the Lady, as they call his penance and prayers for our prior's mother's soul's rest. I would I held the lash! she would be in paradise within an hour, if grim Gislebert's bleeding shoulders could hoist her thither."

"Nay," said Roodspere, struck with the bitter feeling evinced in this rejoinder. "Nay, let those kneel at Edward's shrine, who have anything to ask his mouldering bones can grant. I shall but need your company round the ambulatory, for company's sake."

"Edward's 'mouldering bones?'" repeated the choirmaster, with visible surprise; continuing with warmth, "believe ye not, then,

as all true christians do, that his holy and incorruptible body reposes in its shrine unchanged, as if not a day of death had passed over them? Know ye not—that on St. Edward's festival, pure and rosy lights, laden with sweet perfume, arise from his angelic corpse and involve the whole feretory in glory—the whole chapel in most fragrant incense?"

"Nay, master præcentor, I believe in no monkish miracles in our times, but solely in those of God's grace, when it cleanses a human heart of its vileness and hypocrisy! Yet I have little leisure to waste—and the less if I can find no willing and knowing guide in my research," said Roodspere.

"Well—the lord prior is in his hermitage, and it is his day for penitents to resort to him thither—he cannot need me awhile!" said Dan Gloria, assentingly, but with continued hesitation—and Roodspere remarked that his eyes fell upon him with a strange expression of perturbation and scrutiny, mingled with some other less definable sentiment.

"And where is this famous hermitage?" said Roodspere.

"Yonder, in the clouds of the roof!" replied Dan Gloria, pointing upward to an arched opening, faintly visible in the height

of the tower of the cross, and which seemed on a level with the keystones of the skyey vaulting over the Confessor's shrine. Roodspere's glance could scarcely ascend to such an elevation, and he had some difficulty in believing that it could have been selected even as a scene of ascetic retirement. "Your saint is not yet winged—how mounts he thither? Would he try the breath as well as the faith of his followers?—and, methinks, scarcely a spider, with his hunch on his back, could crawl in at yonder tiny pigeon-hole!" he observed.

"Angels would prop him, if need were—but there is none! There is an entrance from the clerestory—what we see is only an opening to admit so much light as a hermit hath uses for," replied the chaunter, with a slight shudder. "Let us hence—he hath the eyes of the carrion vulture over a plain of battle, and from yonder gap the whole church is visible—chapels and all! But now you may see 'tis not impossible to mount thither without magic mutterings—for yonder comes one of our prior's penitents thence!"

As he spoke, a narrow but massive door in an angle of the transept was opened, and the figure of a man, enveloped in a dark

mantle, made an abrupt appearance. A momentary glimpse was afforded of a flight of stairs within, and then the door closed with a clang that echoed through the pile, and the penitent strode with a hasty and disordered step past the twain of observers. At the same moment his cloak accidentally flew open, and Roodspere recognized in the pale and agitated countenance, and now singularly wild eyes of the stranger, the young nobleman whom he had met in the hall of York Place, and heard designated the Lord Percy. It surprised him very considerably to find one of the cardinal's household a devotee of the rebellious Prior of Westminster; but the cause of his visible emotion was mistaken by the præcentor. "Nay, sir, 'tis nothing strange! My Lord Prior hath such an awakening grace and power in his words that he sends nigh all his penitents away in a distraction and a despair; for he flatters none, and they are fain to purchase peace at its full price!—and all a man hath were little enow for that!"

"The peace of God is not bought with a price—that can be weighed in scales," said Roodspere.

"Lo ye there then! would you contradict St. Peter himself—and read you not what he

is saying to King Sebert here?" returned the Italian, with a degree of playfulness in his tones, pausing beside a very ancient monument, under a canopy of carved wainscot, painted in compartments, and covered with inscriptions proceeding from the mouths of divers figures, in the manner of a modern caricature—chiefly distichs in Latin. Among these St. Peter was uttering an oracle to his royal convert, who was reverently listening on his knees, in the following terms:—

> "Sicut de lignis, per aquam depellitur ignis;
> Sic mala commissa, fiunt donando remissa!"

"This is the tomb of King Sebert," he continued, "who rebuilt our church a thousand years ago; and on this very spot he stood when he came to offer sacrifice to Apollo, and St. Peter rebuked him from a cloud of fire. These limnings are true portraits of the saint and king, for St. Luke the painter came from heaven to enamel them!—I also, believing in these words, have given so lavishly of my goods to St. Edward, that I have not wherewithal to take me home again across the bitter sea!"

> "As water expels fire from wood,
> So paying us, evil grows good!

Is this the oracle whereon you depend, master præcentor?" returned Roodspere, adopting a somewhat free translation, it must be confessed.

"Do you make your jest, master visitor, of the saints and martyrs in glory!" returned Dan Gloria, gazing with extreme earnestness in his extraordinarily lucid eyes, from the depths of his hood. "But, nay! it were too perilous methinks among us—and scarcely wise among the Cambridge eavesdroppers! *Ora pro animâ suâ, frater*!—and let us on."

And hastily muttering some habitual formula of devote remembrance, Dan Gloria led the way through a wicket of most richly-wrought woodwork, into the ambulatory circling the chapel of St. Edward, at the point still adopted as an entrance to the raree-show by the hurrying cicerone of our own times.

"This is St. Benedict's Chapel, wherein the lord prior was born," said the præcentor, opening an iron gate wrought delicately as a spider's woof in elaborate arabesques. Roodspere entered, and gazed with admiration at the magnificent interior—in those days one of the most sumptuous in the church, being dedicated to the patron saint of the Benedic-

tines. In ours, kept closed and desolate as the condemned cell of a malefactor.

"Yea, master visitor! Prior Sancgraal was born here, on the hard marble couch, beneath that glorious canopy where Archbishop Langham lies in his pomp of death—or Father Gislebert lies as oft as he tells the tale," resumed Dan Gloria. "Was not that *bonis auguriis*, sir scholar, sith Simon de Langham was successively Prior and Abbot of this Monastery, Archbishop of Canterbury, Lord High Treasurer of England, and Cardinal, that might have been Pope of Rome, had God so pleased!—Hither they brought the Lady Bigod in her pains, she falling in them upon St. Edward's stairs—and here she perished in devote sequence of a most holy vision, but in infinite anguish—or fat Gildas lies where it is not many men's wont—in his cups! In memory of which event, as you may discern, the floor is covered with heraldic tiles of all the escocheons and achievements of the most noble descent and family of the Bigods and Bohuns, who come also of the great de Valence and Mowbray blood. And my lord prior has caused the screens to be hung, as you may see, with a tapestry of the adventures of Sir Galahad, in quest of the

Sancgraal — whose holy vision brought his lady mother hither to die in the fullest odour of sanctity!"

"Are these your sacred subjects in Westminster, taken from the profane romances of Arthur and Merlin?" said Roodspere, gazing with little admiration at the superb labours of the artistic loom around him. "Truly!—and yonder is the platter whereon they blasphemously feign, in their lying legends, our Lord ate the last supper?"

"How call you it a lying legend when the holy vessel itself is preserved among the treasury of relics in our abbey?" returned the choirmaster, with apparently undoubting credulity. "On St. Edward's Feast it will be displayed to all men's vision and worship, being of the purest white crystal, excepting in Passion Week, when it grows stained as with clots of ruby, and the holy wafers placed upon it show like rings of the beetroot in our Italian garnishes! It was brought from the Holy Land by St. Joseph of Arimathea, and was by him presented to the monastery of Glastonbury, which he founded in the Isle of Avalon, long before the days of the valiant King Arthur. There it was long preserved, and is to this day a proof that the bread and wine did

truly become the body and blood of our Lord, in actuality, and in no figurative and spiritual sense, as the vile Lollards of London do pretense!—And there it abode in great honour, until the wickedness of men greatly increasing, insomuch that certain of the monks of Glastonbury shamelessly took to themselves wives, the anger of Heaven was kindled, and the pagan Danes were permitted to burn and ravage the whole island for several centuries. Sinful Glastonbury among the rest was destroyed by fire; but the Sancgraal was conveyed away from the midst of the flames by a flight of angels, chaunting the antiphon to St. Gregory's Mass! No man knew whither for a long lapse of time, when, as all men know, the knights of King Arthur were moved by many visions and prodigies to undertake the quest of the precious missing vessel. This was the great and final enterprize of that blessed chivalry; but only Sir Galahad, son of Sir Launcelot du Lake, achieved it, for it demanded a virgin purity of body and soul none but he among that noble knighthood possessed. Yet, though he attained the prize, it cost the white-souled, maiden knight very dear, for he died of his pains and weariness in the hermitage of St. Peter, in the Thorny

Isle of Westminster, whereupon our abbey church is now builded. Dying, he ordained that the Sancgraal should be buried with him until such time as that a king, chaste and undefiled in thought and deed as himself, should discover him and his treasure in the grave. This happed when King St. Edward, with his own blessed hands, raised the first earth for the foundation of our church, even in the very spot where his holy body still rests awaiting the trump of doom. And thenceforth hath the Sancgraal continued part and parcel of the treasury of Westminster.

"And thus, by the grace of God,it befel the Lady Bigod to come hither. Being nigh her time of a firstborn heir, after having in vain besought such a good of Heaven during six years she had been wedded to her lord, for the which cause he held her in great disdain and indifference,—on a certain night, in the Castle of Chepstow, in Monmouthshire, the Lady Bigod dreamed that she alone of all women was blessed with the sight of the Sancgraal! It appeared to her, *swooning goldenly through the air*, as was its wont to those whom it summoned on its divine quest. Now, when the lady awakening told her chaplain the substance of her vision, he being a

most pious and learned clerk, reared at the Abbey of Westminster's charges, became immediately aware of a disposition of Heaven in the matter, knowing how that the precious vessel was among the holy things thereunto belonging. Whereupon he plainly perceived and persuaded the Lady Bigod that it was our Lord and our Lady's will she should go on a pilgrimage to St. Edward's Shrine, to procure a safe and happy deliverance.

"Which, wisely believing, the noble dame and the worthy chaplain—who is now our treasurer and stern archidiaconus—for the baron was then absent in the wars against Perkin with the king that is dead—and a goodly attendance, set out on the pilgrimage on foot, even as she had followed the Sancgraal through a weary night of dreams. And so it chanced that when she arrived in these parts, the lady was well nigh spent with toil, being delicately bred. But not the less hastened she with her offerings to the shrine of St. Edward, promising to fill the holy paten with broad pieces, might she be allowed but once to see it, for the salvation of her soul and that of the infant under her heart. Which prayer was doubtless heard, though in woful sort, for it befel that as she ascended the steps of the

Holy Chapel, through great desire and eagerness to reach St. Edward's saving presence, her feet slipped away, and she fell to the ground. Incontinent she was taken in her labour-pains, and ere the chaplain and monks could bear her farther than St. Benedict's chapel here towards the abbot's house, a man-child was born unto her, and herself had resigned the breath she gave to him!"

"Methinks that miracle might be humanly interpreted—with none but dotard monks to give help to a woman in such extremity!" said Roodspere, with indignant warmth. "And so they condemned your prior to the cloister for his mother's folly, and a greedy monk's deceiving interpretation of a sickly-brained dream!"

"Condemned! See you not rather that the saints, Edward and Benedict, thus visibly claimed him for their own?" returned the implicit Italian. "But not only so! The Lord Liulph Bigod was born so strangely and notably deformed, that Gislebert, with good reason, openly averred and maintained the hand of heaven was in it, and that as it was plain he could never bestride a steed or couch a lance, it was fittest to make a man of peace—a holy monk—of him! But at that time the

Lord Bigod would not hear of it, having no other heir to his ancient name. So he took his infant away with him into his own country, and the chaplain also, who would not desert his patroness's orphan. But ever Gislebert continued to have an inward illumination and yearn of the spirit that taught him the child was born to be a champion and support of the holy order in whose bosom he was brought forth. He oft boasts how in secret he instilled this notion from his earliest years into the young child's belief, renewing his persuasions and counsels from time to time with the baron himself. For a long season, in vain—until the Lord Bigod married again, and having a fair and numerous issue by his second wife, who also taking part with the chaplain, he began to listen to reason. The Lord Liulph meanwhile himself grew to a great aversion to the world, and a desire to lead a mortified life, being greatly annoyed and harassed in mind in consequence of the derision his infirmities brought upon him among his companions and kinsfolk. Insomuch that I have heard say he nigh tore his nurse to pieces the first time she made him a visit in his monastery, after he had abode in it a year or twain! He was but yet a mere boy when he was brought to make

his probation here; but he was found so well advanced, by Father Gislebert's care, that at fourteen he could make his profession, and he was so thoroughly imbued with self-denial and mortification that he contentedly resigned the succession to his ancestral lands and honours, in favour of his younger brother, and abandoning his secular rank and name, took that of the holy paten of the supper, out of a singular devotion to the same!—What he hath since become all men know!"

"Or may guess! Ye of Westminster owed him some recompense for his robbed birthright—therefore I marvel not that he is canonized alive," said Roodspere. "But how came you in the Abbey here, master præcentor? Did you encounter with your lord in his studious exile, or was it a miracle brought you too?"

Dan Gloria stood for an instant as if petrified—but he replied, after that space of silence. "I brought tokens and letters to the lord prior from Italy—from one he loved—until when I had never seen him, nor any other Englishman that I wotted of!"

"Not even Cromwel?" mused Roodspere, as he followed the præcentor from the Chapel

of St. Benedict into the next—that of St. Edmund.

"This is the Chapel of the Children, as we call it, who blessedly died before they were old enough to achieve their own eternal bale! It is well with them, sweet innocents!—the snowdrops of mankind that perish in the first beauty of the spring!" said Dan Gloria, and his voice sounded husky and moved from his coif as he pointed to the curious miniature statues on the tomb of the children of Edward II., William of Windsor and Blanche of the Tower. The monumental effigies of the children of Henry III. and of Edward I. at the entrance of the chapel, seemed additionally to entitle it to the præcentor's designation. But Roodspere was chiefly struck with the mournful tone in which he uttered it—and his mind reverted to the circumstances connected with the desertion and death of the child of Marchant Hunne.

"It seems almost as if you grudged these blameless buds their early shedding on the earth, howbeit!" he observed, "would you deem it a happier fate had they lived to steep themselves in blood and guilt, like these mighty princes and warriors who share their home—John of Eltham and William de Va-

lence, or Sir Bernard Brocas, pillowed on his grimly negro's head—or yonder knight of the Leopard and Eagle, who declares himself slain at the battle of Barnet, on behalf of the White Rose?"

"I did but bethink me sadly how there have been Christian children who lacked consecrated dust to swathe them in—the little kings in the Tower—or those the robin redbreasts covered in the ballad!" returned the choirmaster, with a deep sigh. "But let us on—we have much yet to see, and it is growing dusk!—Yet you should not be so hurried as not to pay your homage to St. Edmund on his altar there!"

"He can abide a fitter season—he will tarry our leisure, doubtless," said Roodspere, with a somewhat contemptuous smile.

The chorister looked at him in evident perplexity. "Why then—St. Nicholas can spare us our visitation, too—let us on to our Lady's Chapel!" he then observed, and proceeded at a rapid pace along the avenue round the shrine of St. Edward.

This Chapel of the Kings, as it is now more frequently styled, was then worthy of its royal designation; and Roodspere gazed with interest and admiration as tomb after tomb—

each adorned with the most costly ornaments, glowing with ore and precious inlaid stones, succeeded, in the circle of the ambulatory. But on arriving near the chantry tomb of Henry V. a somewhat untoward circumstance dispelled much of the illusion of the gorgeous spectacle. Dan Gloria had pointed out to him the statue of the hero, gleaming in the silver armour of his battles, under the faint lamp-light shining through the trellised ironwork dividing the chantry from the chapel of St. Edward—when both distinguished a lusty snoring from the enclosure. "It is Dan Gildas, taking his turn in the perpetual prayers we are bounden to make for King Henry's soul!" said the præcentor, with a slight laugh. "Let us wake him and hear what he will say! Gildas!—Friar Gildas! how now, man, dost thou sleep?"

"Fie on it! is the barrel gone dry already?" exclaimed Gildas, rousing like a walrus left asleep on an ebbsand. "Meg, Meg, my tall black hen, is it thou calls?—I love but another as well!—what dost thou jealousy?—'O jug, thou art my love and lady!'"

"Let us hence, and he will think it is the ghost of St. Edward—which they say now walks—or, what is worse, Father Gislebert

calling him!" said Dan Gloria—and a few hasty steps placed them in the towering sable gloom of the triple porch which conducts by a flight of steps to the beautiful brass-woof portals of the chapel of Henry VII. Entering this, Roodspere found himself suddenly surrounded by a dazzling affluence of light, in that most gorgeous and fanciful of Gothic interiors.

Still, in spite of the ages of neglect that have intervened, and the destruction of so much of its magnificent decoration, the chapel of our Lady of Westminster—the designation given it by its devote founder—remains a work on which fairies and genies seem to have united their skill in ornament with the labours of giant artificers. In Roodspere's time it was in the full blaze of its splendour—in the perfection of its infinite beauty! Abbot Islip and his royal patron had unsparingly lavished their wealth and the genius of the age in the completion of this masterpiece of Gothic art. Every species of embellishment had combined to adorn it. The painter, the sculptor, the gilder, and the lapidary had united their arts in its ornamentation with inexhaustible varieties of skill. A magic goldsmith rather than mason seemed to have wrought the roof with

the subtlest niceties of his art, or a fairy sempstress to have hung it with a canopy of the most beautiful lacework. But the whole interior was in fact one piece of superb embellishment, and scarcely a space, however obscure, had escaped the most elaborate decoration. Much of these ineffaceable qualities of the architecture yet remain; but the airy intercolumniations of the aisles are choked with the faded banners and stalls of the knights of the Bath, and crowded with tombs. Of all these latter only the founder's splendid sepulchre and his mother's were as yet in existence. That royal Golgotha—that populace of dead kings whom even the pattering verger finds it too tedious to enumerate—did not yet mingle their purple dust in the vaults below. Much less did any inferior dead, whom Henry VII., with more of kingly pride in his death than in his life, forbade to mingle their clay with royal corruption, presume to raise their monuments in his chapel!

The beautiful brass railing, whose blackened arabesques still protect the tomb of Henry VII. and his queen from vulgar approach, was then bright as gold, and shed a lustrous reticulated shadow on the tesselated pavement. On the farther side of the tomb, beneath the now

vacant east window, stood what was called the Lady Altar. It was of white marble, on a flight of broad but shallow steps of the same, all frosted over with the most elaborate chasings and carvings in silver. But upon this appropriate shrine stood an image of the Virgin in a singularly contrasted taste. It was larger than lifesize, fashioned originally of some dark wood, or which the lapse of time had almost blackened; dressed, like a painter's lay figure, in a royal robe of cloth-of gold, stiff with pearls and rich embroidery. It was crowned with a diadem, and held a sceptre in its extended hand—probably borrowed from the regalia of England, confided to the keeping of the monks of Westminster. This was an extremely ancient and highly reverenced image, and it was traditionary that St. Dunstan had carved it. Miraculous properties were ascribed to it, and it was said to express satisfaction or otherwise by turning its eyes, with varied meaning, on its worshippers! But this miracle was concealed from unlicensed curiosity by a long black veil that usually hung from head to foot of the statue, and yet was in itself sufficiently marvellous. It was said to be the very one which the charitable Roman matron, St. Veronica, tore from her head and presented

to the Saviour, to wipe the bloody sweat from his visage as he ascended Calvary. According to tradition, the print of the agonized features of the Redeemer remained upon it—and indeed a careful observation might have traced some such ghastly limning, of the earliest restoration of the arts, either woven or stained into its black web.

Roodspere stood without any signs of homage, but rather in mute disgust and indignation, before this graven image, for some moments—when he was suddenly startled by a whispering sound in his ear. He turned and perceived that it was Dan Gloria, who was addressing him with great earnestness, but in a stifled undertone. "Laud be to our Lady! we are alone here, and I can give you a counsel, master visitor, which ye will do well not to slight. With whatever hope of reward or advancement you are among us, leave all, and depart, for of a surety only ruin and destruction await you here! The Afric tree that blasts all beneath its shadow is less deadly than that of him who rules in Westminster!"

"Speak you of your lord prior? Even so, know ye not that my business on earth—and here—is to root out these black plants that choke the land with evil?" returned Roodspere.

"Prior Sancgraal is a sworn foe and destroyer of all your kind, sithence I cannot doubt you are of this new order of Lollards whom they call Lutherans!" returned the præcentor, with much agitation.

"Are you an espial? If so you do well to veil your face," said Roodspere.

"I am none! If you can read truth in men's visages, master scholar, read it in mine!" said the præcentor, impatiently throwing back his hood. The visage thus revealed was of remarkable but haggard beauty, stamped with the traces of dissolute and stormy passions and excess. The glittering moisture in the eye, and the dark red lips, also betokened too constant a familiarity with the purple of the vine—and Roodspere thought immediately that his upper lip was pencilled rather than shaded by the hair with which his apparent years should have darkened it. But on the whole, the puzzle and uncertainty of his thoughts were increased rather than diminished by the survey, and his looks doubtless expressed his perplexity, for the chorister seemed to shrink from their earnest inquiry, and resumed his hood.

CHAPTER XVIII.

DAN GLORIA.

O wretched state! O bosom black as hell!
O limed soul, that struggling to be free,
Art more engaged!

HAMLET.

"FEAR not for me, who fear not for myself; yet I thank you for your goodwill, dan præcentor," resumed Roodspere, "I am in no danger that I wot of, and the Master whom I serve lets not even the sparrow fall without his cognisance."

"Small comfort that to the bird that drops with a boy's bolt in its breast!" returned Dan Gloria, sardonically. "But you will believe in your danger when I tell you that you are well known here to be a disciple and follower of Bilney of Cambridge, who 'scaped the flames by a wind-waft only! And that our monks have thereupon come to the conclusion you will speedily betray yourself into their hands—until when they are patiently to abide

their time. This is the secret of the submission that attends you wherever you turn, and is but the smooth glide of the torrent to the brink!"

"Are you so deeply bosomed in the monks' cabala, sir stranger?" returned Roodspere, considerably struck by the revelation. Dan Gloria glanced at him with the look of one from his windows who knows he has some dark and forbidden thing within the walls, but without replying; and Roodspere continued, with emotion. "Had your purpose been to win my tarriance, you could not have employed a better means than these threats of harmful consequence! Deem not but that when I came among ye, I knew I came into a cave of panthers, strewed with the mangled bones, and blotted with the blood of former victims."

"And yet, a very Daniel, you have ventured in!" returned the præcentor, with a kindle, apparently of admiration, in his gaze. "Why then it must be so! And you are a connatural slip of that mighty tree whose iron bark so many axes have never yet availed to hew into."

Roodspere coloured, and a strong shade of displeasure passed over his face; but he replied with mildness, "I trust to a mightier

protection still!—nay, what is all the might of earth compared?"

"Let me take shelter with you then also, for of a surety I am in need of some harbour and refuge worse than a ship dismasted and unrigged of helm and sail!" returned the præcentor, eagerly. "Yea, master visitor! thus at your feet let me crave of you help and support against my enemies in this abbey, who have at last prevailed with the prior to order that I shall quit it, and be sent back to mine own woful land, which is and hath ever been, as a paradise inhabited by fiends!"

And before Roodspere could prevent the purposed humiliation, Dan Gloria had thrown himself on his knees before him, in an intensity of supplication! It may be imagined that Roodspere's suspicions were all quickened by the information, and that he felt no manner of inclination to assist the monks in their evident project to rid themselves of a presence they thus by implication admitted to be dangerous. But he was annoyed with the womanish passion of tears and entreaties into which the chauntmaster now burst, and with finding that, when he extended his hand to raise him, he seized it and pressed it to his bosom and kissed it with very superfluous

marks of devotion. "Arise, arise!" he said, "I will not suffer you, nor any other, to be wrongfully entreated under my authority! But what are your offences that the monks would so hurriedly be rid of ye?"

"But pretexts with which they cowl their malice—albeit I own I have need of holier counsel and confession than any I can find in this monastery! But they would make me their scapegoat, as if I were the sole reveller and frequenter of evil in the abbey!" returned the suppliant. "And would you listen to me, master visitor, you shall learn more truths of these vile monks in an hour than with all your pains elsewhere in a year! Moreover, you may be the means to save a wretched and erring soul if, as you say, you come among us to bring back the lost sheep to the fold!"

"To bring back the lost sheep—but not to disentangle the serpent from the brake!" replied Roodspere. "Kneel not to me! I will accept no revelation you can make *sub sigillo confessionis:* all must be open, and such as may be declared in witness against these men and their doings, that the nations may shake their dust off their feet!"

"I am willing to undergo any penance—any punishment—you may deem my offences

deserve! *Peccavi, pater!*" persisted the still kneeling Roman.

"Peace, peace! I tell you again I come not here to mete ye out pardon for unrepented offences, after the fashion of your monks—or to impose such penances as ye madly deem their expiation!" returned Roodspere, with imprudent vehemence. "Paternosters, Ave Marias, candles lighted to St. Thomas and St. Edward — I tell you, assuredly, these nothing avail! The word of the Christ that pardoned, was not—go on a pilgrimage — whip yourself till the blood flows — give treasures to this shrine, or to that—but GO, AND SIN NO MORE!"

He perceived—and with profound emotion —that Dan Gloria's visage grew of an ashy paleness. "Why speak you this parable unto me, sir priest?" he said, rising with a dizzy look.

"It is the parable of the adulteress taken in her guilt!—Why should it trouble thee?" replied Roodspere, and truly with a suddenness and dexterity that would have done credit to Cromwel himself, or to a French or German judge-criminal, endeavouring to surprise an accused into self-conviction.

"Nay, master doctor; I am but troubled

when one of your deep scholarship and authority seem to repugn all trust in prayers, fastings, almsgiving, discipline of the rod, and frequentation of holy places, whereupon methought the church granted her absolution, and God, remission and pardon?" said the præcentor, after a pause.

It seemed to Roodspere as if he heard the cry of some benighted wretch sinking in an abyss; for such to him was confidence in the physical forms of expiation to which the practice of the Roman Church had degraded the sublime theory of Christianity. He felt as if an eternal soul might be saved if he would stretch forth his hand!—And in spite of the danger to himself, involved in the denial of propositions that formed so essential a part of the dominant orthodoxy, he launched into an open declaration of their futility. "He who trusts in these means of redemption, bridges hell-flames with straw!"

"Look to it, fair clerk!" interrupted the aghast præcentor, "I am not all untaught, as perchance you deem, in the jangle of these times of the devil let loose in the person of Martin Luther!—and well I wot that for saying much less than this was Richard Hunne

condemned, in this very monastery, to the flames!"

"Richard Hunne!—And do his murtherers rejoice so much at this time in their guilt as to desire to repeat it?" returned Roodspere, and his probing look startled the inmost soul of Dan Gloria.

"His murtherers!—Master Roodspere, of whom or what speak you?—The fiend strangled Richard Hunne in his dungeon ere judgment could be done upon him, as I have ever heard!" he replied, in extremely agitated tones.

Roodspere paused. He felt that he had perilously compromised himself by the exposition of his doctrines, and that he was, besides, working completely against his original design. He perceived the necessity of taking another course. "The story is told manywise—and I am no judge in the debate," he observed. "But, master præcentor, deem not that I preach but tidings of wanhope and despair! The mercy of God is greater than the sinfulness of men, as the skies are broader than the earth!—And how it works evangely in human ministrations, if, as you have professed, you desire to become my friend and ally in the

Abbey, I will at more convenient seasons expound to you!"

"I will be your servitor—your slave—your espial against all danger and deceit!—Guardian angel I may not be, but guardian devil even were something worth if he served with love and fealty, as I will thee!" said Dan Gloria, with so eager an enthusiasm and warmth—so strange a glance, lurid with a wild, craving, athirst expression—that Roodspere involuntarily shrunk back. "But my adherence and your teachings must be alike secret and stolen!—Wild birds love bilberries better than cage meats! I know a way how I may visit you unobserved of all, in the Cloisters—whither I will oft come with the shadows of the night!"

"Not so! I will have no private resort with any of this fraternity! It is sufficient if you attend me at fitting times, and openly! I do wholly forbid you all access to my privacy!" said Roodspere, sternly. Dan Gloria looked at him with an instant's devouring scrutiny. "Has the black whisper already been at work?" he then muttered, and Roodspere remarked that his delicate hand seemed to clutch the air convulsively, as if at some invisible weapon of vengeance. "But no matter!—This foils old Gislebert at least; and

we are bidden all to submit ourselves to our visitor's will without show of resistance! You must give my service and tarriance a pretext, howbeit, sir clerk!—and let it be, that you desire to learn the Pope's psalmody of me or I depart."

"I need give no reasons for my will—and shall not false ones!" returned Roodspere. "Neither do lascive warblings like thine seem to me well suited to the praise and worship of God; but rather to the profane minstrelsy, wherein it seems to me ye more delightedly employ them!"

"I scarce sing a lay Prior Sancgraal fashioned not—and is not Prior Sancgraal a holy man, lacking but the canonization of death?" returned Dan Gloria, with evident pettishness. "Oh, by my troth, you are like our St. Edward when he prayed away the nightingales for ever from Westminster, for disturbing him at his devotions, sith you cannot abide sweet sounds!—I will teach his prayer to you, and it shall be a spell to banish me from your presence whenso you will!" And to Roodspere's great surprise and no less vexation, the præcentor suddenly burst into the most extraordinary profusion of plaintive, trilling, intertwisted harmonies that ever at

once puzzled and fascinated attention! A grove of nightingales, contending with each other in every variety of sweet and complex note—such as may be heard in wooing time, on a summer night, in Southern Italy, could scarcely have equalled the bewildering play and benetted lusciousness of the melodies wherewith Dan Gloria imitated that natural orchestra. With unmeaning sounds, indeed, but admirably imitative of the quick, glittering gush of the nightingale's notes. And in the midst of this warbling concert the præcentor contrived also to weave the words of a song, chanted to an air solemn and harsh as the character of the king-saint who was supposed to utter it—with amazing skill and a wonderful duality or rather myriadness of tones. Mockery and defiance in the first place characterised the sweetness of the nightingale accompaniment, such as might well be excited among warblers so exquisite by the scornful rejection of their harmony. But gradually it changed into a melancholy sweetness of supplication—then into a resigned submission—and, finally, as if yielding to the spell of the prayer, melted into fainter and fainter strains, till Roodspere himself could almost believe he heard the farewell notes of the tuneful colony winging its

way for ever from the groves of Westminster! An imitation of the words may perhaps be given, but the sweetest and wildest breathings of a dozen flageolets and flutes could scarcely surpass the effect produced by the unassisted vocalization of the præcentor:—

ST. EDWARD AND THE NIGHTINGALES.

O Lord! Thou knowest how they trouble me—
  Strim strong pummerilla rallabilla raltum!—
These nightingales on every tree!—
  Whereaway, whereaway? Hereaway, love!
My heart is sick of this minstrelsy—
  Hithercome, hithercome, love, love, love!—
That ever rings like a mockery—
  Whereaway, whereaway? Hereaway, love!
Take hence for aye these birds, dear Lord, or me!—
    Strim strong pummerilla rallabilla raltum!

They mock me, Lord, most bitterly!—
  Hence away, hence away, sweets, sweets, sweets!
All loving thoughts I have forsworn for thee—
  Twit, twit, twitter, love, wilt thou love me?
These sing of nought but love's felicitee!—
  Whither shall we—whither shall we flee?
Banish them, Lord, I pray, eternally!—
  We must hence, we must hence, eternally!
    Strim strong pummerilla rallabilla raltum!

Roodspere was troubled—troubled at the strange fascination with which he listened to

this lay. Some fiend, endowed with power to ensnare the soul in a network of melody, seemed busy at his enthralment! He broke the spell with an effort. "I have told you already I like not this manner of melody," he observed, with a harshness alien to his character. "But yet you shall tarry in the abbey—and I will discourse with you on your soul's weal—and put you, if it may be, on the path of light that of late has been pioneered to the skies!"

"Promulge the order for my stay, then, without delay, or I must hence, and belike in some sanctuary ruffian's charge," said Dan Gloria; and hastily renewing his assurance, Roodspere himself led the way out of the chapel of Henry VII.

They took but a cursory survey of the remaining chapels of St. Paul, St. John the Baptist, and even of the very curious and beautiful one of Abbot Islip's erection. Dan Gloria also seemed now to understand that the visitation was only a pretext for conversation with himself. But he paused at the foot of the flight of steps that ascended to the platform of the Confessor's chapel, with something at once playful and sinister in his look. "All Catholic Christians kneel to St. Edward here,

pass hurriedly else as they may!" he observed.

"I will kneel—to ask God's pardon for those who give his worship in idolatry to this human dust!" returned Roodspere, and he knelt at the foot of the carved balustrade, whose massive oak stairs were worn into hollows by the knees of devotees.

"Will holy water exorcise his fiend—or is it an angel?" muttered Dan Gloria, and, half in sport, and half in earnest, but in a manner scarcely compatible with the demeanour of his seeming sex, he threw a light shower of the consecrated liquid, which filled two vases of richly chased silver, on either hand, over him. It was precisely at this moment that a sudden gleam of what seemed to be a supernatural brightness, darted down from the very summit of the vaultings overhead, lighted the group into momentary relief, and vanished in the dusk of the twilight! And Dan Gloria's whole appearance and manner sustained as sudden a change. "It is Prior Sancgraal, espying us out with his Venetian sun-glasses, which have power to set whole navies in flames!" he exclaimed with evident trepidation. "Let us hence."

Roodspere concluded his prayer deliberately, and then with great calmness and serenity complied with the request. Much to his sur-

prise, however, and to Dan Gloria's visible dismay, on emerging from the ambulatory they perceived the prior himself, leaning as if absorbed in meditation on one of the fretted pillars of the beautiful tomb of Edmund Crouchback! Sancgraal and the visitor had neither seen nor spoken with each other since their interview in Clerkenwell—and now the prior seemed so lost in reverie that the mutual reserve might easily have been maintained. "Disturb him not!" whispered Dan Gloria. "He is in one of his raptures, wherein at times scarcely a petard discharged at his ear could recal him earthward!"

"We must try a less enginery," returned Roodspere; and approaching the prior, he saluted him politely, and without heeding the rapt and stony insensibility in which he continued, he informed him, subjecting him meanwhile to a quiet but intent observation, that he had been informed it was his intention to dismiss the præcentor, Dan Gloria, from the Abbey, on certain envious murmurs and charges alleged against him. This he, the legatine visitor, considered an infringement of his powers, and moreover an act of great and masterful injustice. In consequence he commanded, until the charges against the præcen-

tor were clearly made and established, before himself as judge, and authorised him, to remain in Westminster. This piece of information restored the ecstatic prior with singular abruptness to his senses.

"Master visitor, you trouble my contemplations to little purpose—and are misinformed! The young man himself has vowed a vow to St. James of Compostella, and would depart upon it!" he replied, with perhaps for the first time some perceptible degree of opposition in his restrained and still submissive tones.

"I release him from it then—and henceforth command him to yield me his personal attendance and service while I am in this Abbey," returned Roodspere.

The prior's glance fell upon Dan Gloria—and with something of the effect of a serpent's fascinating a bird. The latter's bosom seemed to heave and pant like that of the doomed warbler perched vainly aloft in his leafy home; and he advanced some steps towards him, as if drawn by an irresistible magnetic influence.

"No," said Roodspere, interposing authoritatively, "I release your chaunter from all obedience and service to any but myself in the abbey—and from this instant."

"I am glad of it, master visitor!—very

glad!—You take our abuses boldly by the horns, to begin with this foreigner, whose license my lord abbot and I have borne with too long, in hope that some day he would take example, and show some christianity! But the leopard leaves not his spots!—and, albeit grievingly, I warn you, his company and conversation will neither tend to your credit nor your weal!"

"Nor his spots the leopard, as certainly, until his beautiful but hideous skin is torn from his back, belike!" returned Roodspere, with austere significance.

"But the leopard meanwhile has claws!" returned Sancgraal, with a fiery glance that failed in its purpose of pointing the inuendo at the præcentor. "And now as it chances, my devotion of supererogation being concluded, I shall have some time myself to manifest to you my perfect obedience and submission to the lord legate's will! Even now I would joyfully lead you round our schools, and hear what good report so renowned a scholar can make of them!"

Roodspere hesitated; but after a pause, signified his acquiescence. "And I trust, my lord prior," he observed, "I shall no longer find ye worthy of Erasmus's commendation

of ye some while agone. *Ignorantissimè eruditi!*"

"God forbid we should merit in aught the commendation of that thrice-condemned apostate!" returned Sancgraal, with vehemence. "But now, master visitor, might I crave to know whether your commission brought you for the first time among us, or whether we twain have met on some former occasion? Say, Bilney's trial, which deservedly stirred the notice of all Cambridge-bred scholars?"

"Nay, my lord prior, we met for the first and only time before—at the burning of the dead body of Richard Hunne!" was the stern and significant reply.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE HERMITAGE OF ST. WULFIN.

Under thy mantle black there hidden lye
Light-shunning theft, and traitorous intent,
Abhorred bloodshed, and vile felonie,
Shameful deceit, and danger imminent!

SPENSER.

THE Feast of St. Edward occurred at the close of the first six weeks of Raphael Roodspere's abode in Westminster Abbey. Events of poiltical importance, as well as his own private affairs, made this period as remarkable in history as it continued ever after in his memory. Wolsey's French alliance was openly and triumphantly avowed, though not of course its secret basis—to the great increase of his unpopularity. War with the Emperor Charles V. was declared, and only the arrival of the legate who was joined with Wolsey in commission to examine the validity of the king's marriage, was awaited, to strike a more galling blow at him and his influence,

in the divorce of his kinswoman, Queen Katharine. Campeggio's arrival was daily expected; even the slow journeys of an invalid could excuse no longer delay. Meanwhile the queen and her friends continued quiescent, apparently lulled into security by confidence in the motives Wolsey's craft had assigned for the opening of his plans.

An equally secret but portentous revolution meanwhile changed the destinies of those actors whose share in the great drama of the age we have undertaken to elucidate. But perhaps the general aspect of affairs would be best shown by a visit to the scene where their entangling web was chiefly woven—to that cell whose occupant spread his almost invisible lines in so many directions, that his victims seemed to include the most opposite classes and personages—the wasp and the moth, the glisten of the coxcomb greenfly, the legs and shattered wings of the dun commonalty, the strong hornet and the tiny gnat! Let us ascend to the Hermitage of St. Wulfin, about noon on the day before St. Edward's; where Prior Sancgraal devotely keeps the vigil of the festival.

We enter at the east corner of the south cross, and tediously ascending from story to story

of the galleries, traverse the highest one, dimly lighted through a series of narrow arches opening on the body of the church, at a dizzy elevation. It terminates in a massive door hinged on a pillar, at the angle formed by the junction of the east wall of the Tower of the Cross. Opening this, we find ourselves in a strange scene!—The Hermitage of St. Wulfin was situated on the very summit of the church, over the vaultings of the semicircle of the chapels—and there continued until Sir Christopher Wren found it necessary to build a new roof. At first glance, this chamber appeared to be a vast, angular-roofed cavern, duskily illumined from deep-set interstices in the sloping walls. Indeed it strongly resembled the inside of the half of a great ship, set keel uppermost, and was, in fact, the interior of the cross-beamed roof of the church, extending from the east face of the central tower to the then modern addition of the Chapel of Henry VII. For ages this vast loft had been used as a receptacle for every species of lumber from the church below. Shattered remains of carvings, tombs, and broken statues, from periods of remote antiquity, made it bear some resemblance to the studio of a Gothic sculptor, who had died and left his works in a state of

ruinous defacement and unfinish. But on the whole it was fitted up with considerable scenic skill as a theatre of ascetic devotion. The bare and ponderous timbers of the roof, the deep, unglazed apertures in the eaves, admitting a howling and whistling wind, and darkened light — the sombre shadows of the arches opening on the interior of the church, at a prodigious height above its floor—and the few rude articles of furniture, realised every discomfort the madness of asceticism could demand. A table, formed of a solid block of wood, resembling a butcher's chopping-board—two or three chairs of twisted beech—a variety of books and papers, in open presses—an altar, fashioned of collected fragments of old stone and carvings, surmounted by a wooden crucifixion, at the extremity of the inverted ark—a couch of rough furze, hardly fit to be the lair of a wild beast — composed the inventory. Implements of penitential devotion—scourges and hairshirts—were somewhat ostentatiously arranged, as if in readiness for use; and a complete skeleton, very skilfully anatomised, grimly supported upright by an iron stake, marked that Sancgraal shared the gloomy passion of the holy men he proposed to imitate for the contemplation of mortality. The in-

struments of torture appeared to have been in very recent use, for some of them were still discoloured, either with the proprietor's own blood, or of those who submitted themselves to his discipline, under the influence of the like fanaticism. A great quantity of phials, pots, herbs and drugs, denoted that the prior devoted some portion of his time to the favourite clerical pursuit of medicine. The books appeared to be the only articles in which he allowed himself any degree of luxury, being for the most part richly bound and illuminated. The skull of the skeleton was used as a lamp—evidenced by a pale sickly glare oozing from its eyeless sockets—and was necessary even in daylight. A brazier of live coals, such as was used in kindling the censers for the service of the church, glowed like the eye of the Cyclops in a remote, soot-hung recess, obviously used as a chimney-corner, where the monk could prepare his electuaries and unguents, or distil the virtues of his herbs.

Here it was that Prior Sancgraal devoted himself to the austerities that had gained him his renown as a saint: and here it was that he received the numerous devotees attracted by it, who could endure the fatigue of the ascent. They were principally persons of

high rank or of enormous crimes—sometimes of both. The queen herself was said to have paid this lofty confessional a reverential visit; and here, at the moment we proceed in our record, no less a personage than that great Duke of Norfolk who won Flodden Field, was kneeling, in abject superstition, in confession, at the prior's feet!—After a long interval, he withdrew, and Sancgraal was left alone.

"This then is the secret!" he muttered, starting into a sudden and vivid animation from the statuesque attitude in which the duke left him, not deigning to escort him even to the door of the cell. "The king has confided it to this wise counsellor—and our most Catholic queen is to be divorced!—our devote heiress disinherited!—to make the gibing Frenchwoman who wrote the Heptameron our ruleress—her children our future kings! And this is Wolsey's policy! 'Tis not too late to thwart him, howbeit; the queen must know of this plot upon her own and her daughter's honour and rights! A woman, a queen, a mother, and a Castilian—she will know how to avenge herself—and to hurl back the cardinal's projects in ruin upon his own head! It strains the canons certes to divulge a confession; but the church's

weal is the paramount law!—and, moreover, I will not disclose it as such, or with the duke's appended name. As a revelation, then?—from St. Edward himself? It were to the credit of our saint!—But will the queen trust in such a warning? Will even the daughter of Isabel the Catholic believe in a miracle, in these times? Why not? She believes that St. Anthony made the fishes of the sea throng to his homilies!—that St. James, on his white charger, led on the assaults on Granada!"

The prior mused profoundly for a few minutes over this consideration, as if (causelessly, Heaven knows!) imagining that the deep sea of human credulity, in which the Church of Rome has made so many miraculous draughts, was exhausted!

"Fall as it may, she must be informed of the truth, and to-morrow!" he concluded. "I would I could persuade her as easily not to take in such ill part King Henry's courtship of her black-eyed handmaiden, Mistress Boleyn. It were well done, indeed, to lodge so sharp an enemy of the Cardinal in the king's bosom! Yet her sapless lover, Northumberland's heir, believed and trembled when I refused his whining entreaties to

wed him in secret to her, on the score of her heretical pratings, and known leanings thitherward! — What will not men believe when religion seems to speak? Let Jonas swallow the whale, instead of the whale, Jonas, and their credulity would but gulp it the easier down!"

He smiled derisively as he mused thus; and even if Prior Sancgraal's deeds had not given evidence of the fact, it might thence have been gathered that he shared the actual historical condition of the intellect of his church, which had lapsed either into sceptism and infidelity, or into absolute atheism. A natural consequence, in minds sufficiently enlightened to perceive the absurdity of the doctrinal beliefs, but not to receive a purer illumination from the long-clouded truths now gradually unveiling to men's eyes.

Sancgraal sunk into a profound reverie, but which, from his expression, was not a pleasing one. "But no, no!—it cannot be!" he muttered at last, as if to give his thoughts the authority of sound. "The seraph purity that awed and attracted my soul nigh equally, must hold absolute dominion over this sweet prater, who governs his pinky blood as deftly as a fluteplayer the stops and breathings of

his music. But has he won from me her soul? Has he stolen from me the reward of toil and danger so great? For hath she not refused constantly to see me . . . even as the physician of her sweet body?—ill and infinitely troubled, as Barbara reports her! And when I thrust myself unbidden into her presence—when I adjured her to fulfil her vows—when I reminded her that on St. Edward's day her novitiate is completed, and her espousals with heaven to be consummated—did she not dare to refuse to listen to me! to reproach me with forcing her to break her promise to her new confessor, by my presence!—and, finally, did she not overtly declare, she felt she had not strength worthily to keep the vows of religion! that she had determined not to jeopardy her soul by taking on her a yoke heavier than humanity was fashioned to bear! Is not that the very twang of Wittenberg? And when I charged her, as she would inherit eternal weal or woe, to render me an account of the heretical doctrine she had received, turned she not on me, like a dove that defends its nest, and called me false witness and calumniator against one, who, in all his words and deeds was angel-like and true!—What but love, that gives the like timorous creatures their

courage and defiance, could give that once lamb-like innocent hers? And if so, is she not in his power—so as never was she, or could have been, in mine! For, Sancgraal, she never loved thee! It is not in woman to love one so maliciously freaked by nature into deformities! But the dominion of her mind was much—and of that too has he deprived me?"

"But what will he not win from me?" continued this bitter meditation. "All for which I have spent my life of lies—for which, in my youth, I toiled and sweated in the bondage of a dotard monk; denied all joy, all hope, all play of nature in my veins!—for which blood is rusting into my soul, and the curse of violated vows is upon me!—What then are the wages of all my unheard-of sufferings, guilt, remorse, despair?—The bastard of a lowborn priest comes to oust me from the second inheritance I have so nigh achieved, that might repay me for all the wealth and honours I have lost! Doubtless Wolsey intends his bastard shall be Abbot of Westminster—he is as lavish to those whom he loves of gifts, as to his foes of injuries!—This distance between them is but feigned, to lull our fears, or silence scandalous report!"—

"But why delays this espial of ours?"—

the prior's musing now drifted into another channel.

"This were a long abidance, even for Sir Honeymouth, in Clerkenwell!—But mayhap they have returned together, and SHE is watching the opportunity to glide hither in secrecy! The rule of St. Benedict must be observed by us now, forsooth, in all its rigour! —and that prescribes, it seems, that the superiors and inferiors of monasteries shall not frequent each others' cells, meet or converse, but in public!—Dog! shall I not break thy teeth for this bite to the bone?—But is even Maudelyn faithful? Plays she the true espial, or but deceives me with the semblance?—But her own safety demands his destruction as well!—She dares not, if she would, play false!—Her name is Maudelyn Hunne!—His flowery face may lure her serpent eyes in vain!"

"Away, winter, away!
Come, summer, come!
The frosty heart, too, may
Melt when the iced streams play,
And the red, red rosebuds bloom!"

A voice was heard warbling these words, as if to give notice of its owner's approach, in the vestibule.

"Introite, fili mî!—the door is unbarred!" said the cautious prior; adding, in a dismal undertone to himself, "ten years ago! and could I have believed one direct from the clouds who should have told me I should live to hate the very sound of this voice?—to feel my blood curdle at the approach of her it 'longeth to?"

"It is I, my lord—who would know your will concerning the chaunts to-morrow!" replied the choirmaster of Westminster, entering with visible hesitation—but, after a brief survey of the chamber throughout its extent, advancing more boldly. "Are you otherwise busied—or may I speak with you now?"

"I am alone, Maudelyn!" replied the prior; and that address completely satisfied Dan Gloria that he was.

"Why made you your ceremony of admittance then, lord prior?—We are old acquaintance, ye wot!" *she* replied—which pronoun we shall use as often as it pleases the præcentor to admit, in dialogue, her proper sex.

"Too well, too well!—But now, in turn, what is your real purport with me? What news do you bring from Clerkenwell?" said Sancgraal, with extreme eagerness.

"They will content you little, my lord prior, it fears me," replied Dan Gloria, while a spasm, meant for a smile, writhed over her lips. "Set yourself to imagine the worst at once, and still are you far behind it! And now tell *me!*—what is the worst a skilled confessor would dread for another's so fair penitent, given as they are to each other's sole companionship, amid the embowering solitudes of the mimic Eden of Clerkenwell Close?"

"It is false; it is false!—Prioress Juliana haunts him with jealous vigilance!—Barbara's ounce-eyes are never off her charge!" returned Sancgraal, with disordered vehemence.

"The bee rifles the honeysuckle while the wasp buzzes around it!—To speak plainly, he hath foiled both your trusted spies by ever holding his converse with Lily-Virgin out of the whispering walls of the convent, in the open orchards and woodlands and green alleys of Clerkenwell Close, with only the blue skies and the amorous birds to be delators of their doings!" said Dan Gloria, watching with bitter satisfaction the blackening shadows on the prior's visage. "Dame Juliana bade me often warn you so—and perchance I have too long refrained, in the dread to add to your

already infinite perplexities; though indeed but a drop cast into the sea! Moreover, our object being to entrap him in his heresies—entangle him in his own snares—methought I could not do better than suffer him to weave them on where he imagined himself the least observed—like your spiders up here! Yet be assured I turned my head away but as the cat from the mouse, when it would have the poor wretch betray the life that makes the sport of killing; and thereby have I now acquired the most certain proof, not only of our visitor's heresies, but of a wickedness and profanation that nigh exceed belief, even in a man of the church!"

"What hast thou discovered?—Speak on!—That the serf labours in his infamous lord's behalf, and would purchase Westminster with the sacrifice of a purity vowed to our Lord Jesu?" said Sancgraal, struggling, but ineffectually, with all his mental supremacy, to control the physical signs of an overpowering agitation.

"Be patient!—Soon enough come ill news, without welcoming them in the porch!" returned the malicious choirmaster.

"True, true!—he suffered you then to

go with him to Clerkenwell to-day, and there . . . . ?"

"Nay, he hath always forbidden mine attendance with him there—and, in sooth, I shun too close a privacy with him—as I do with all other observers! Besides, he wearies me with his tedious preachments and endless exhortations to repent of the offences—you so wisely imputed to me, doubtless!—And doth affright and astony me with his heretic denials of the means of pardon and absolving the church accords all sinful men—whereof I have made you constant and true report," said Dan Gloria. "Natheless I follow him nigh as constantly as his shadow; and, as you promised me, Sister Barbara gives me entrance in Clerkenwell, and every aidance in her power. But his trick of wandering in the Close baffled me awhile, though I trow me the adder's stealth winds not more glidingly than my steps can follow! I dreaded his detection—lest he should then take part with grim Gislebert and banish me—or with thee, and bid me hence on my pilgrimage to him of the cockleshells! However, at length, by frequent observation, I ascertained me, that 'twas his wont to hold discourse with Lily-Virgin oft in a bower they call 'Eve's,' in a woodland

copse through which Fleet flows, making music on his way—whose banks are there bordered with an infinitude of flowers, and grass deep and soft as green wool, lavishly embroidered by the handmaidens of the summer. You love not such natural delights, Sancgraal, or ere now you would have noted how verdurously a sweet chamber of presence for such a loving pair it is! The arbour circles like a ring around an aged oak in the middest, whose branches overhead, matted with vine and all manner of creeping fragrances, vault walls of the whitethorn and laurel, thick as the dungeon depths of the foundations of our Abbey. So that albeit the woodland is behind, no manner of espial needs be dreaded from without, and those sheltered within may well deem they could discourse in all security.—But, laud be to our Lady! I noted that the whole upper trunk of the oak was much hollowed and decayed, though greenly decked, like a grandsire at a feast, with his garlanded boughs! I trusted no one, for all the nuns think only, night and day, how they may win his favour, and do seem as if they preferred him as absolutely to you as magpies wheat to darnel!—Sister Cicely has never wearied since he came among them in

devising pretty cakes to tempt his delicate palate withal! But 'tis true, he lays on them no harsh observance, and smiles on all they do in the way of innocent desport. The rigours of the Benedictine rule he deems only good to be restored among us!—Oh, you should see him when he sits talking among them at refection, or when they take their wheels and fall aspinning for hours in the cloister! You would think it was an angel discoursing heavenly music—so fondly do they listen! Wondrously differs it from the stern lectures he holds us in the schools, or even his Greek exercises in the Cloister here, when some think he makes mere grammar lore delightsome as a minstrel's tale!—Well, as I said, none of them will lend any hand in a contrivance against him—so I was fain to scoop me out a hiding place in the oak without any help!—whose only fault was that it crumbled all too readily, whereas I would full fain have left bark and bough unmarred. But nothing venture, nothing win!—I made me an owl's roost in the tree, well shaded by thick leaves and hanging maiden's hair, having first affrighted forth the ringdoves that make it their resort—and there, from very sunrise

until nigh this hour, patiently abided I the discovery I sought—and did obtain!"

"And it was—that the base Lutheran has betrayed the rights given him by the church—and—and—won her to his blasphemous lust!" gasped Sancgraal.

"You shall hear," replied Dan Gloria, with mocking tranquillity. "But why should it trouble you so much, lord prior, to attain at last so great and decisive a testimony against this heretic priest?—It was high noonday, and my heart was nigh worn out with its impatience and throbbing, when they sought the arbour's shelter—but just in time to rouse me from as it were a swoon of weariness and pain! Gramercy to chance, they sate them down in the ivy bench around my oak's gnarled trunk; side by side, though, indeed, at some modest remotion, cannot be denied! Then did master doctor draw a little book he ever carries in his bosom, forth—which he says, I know not whether truly, was written by those four who are called the Evangelists—for the which perusal so many have carried faggots or feasted the flames of late! And from this book, with many strange and subtly-wrenched texts, he strove to convince Mistress Lily, who listened like her own flower drinking the sunshine in—

of the unlawfulness and folly of her purposed immuration. You will not believe me, prior, but truly I tell you, had nature resumed her earliest work, and fashioned a pair for one another, she could not more fittingly have matched these! So thought I in my own despite as I gazed down upon them, with the owl's red-hot eyes in the leaves! The high belief and enthusiasm in the one's face — the loving trust and submiss devotion in the other's — did, methought, adapt them even more than their like beauty and purity of look, which might have awed the devils—or even thee, as it did their undreamed watcher! Oh, surely there is nothing sweeter and more lustrous with the light of youth and innocence, in the fresh dews of the morning, than in their loves! For they love, they love, lord prior! Themselves confessed it!—How it befel that the revelation was made, myself that listened as if every pore were a fine sense, can scarcely declare! I heard him—yes, I heard him, like one that wandered in a dream of paradise, assure her that heaven would be infinitely better content with her fulfilment of the holy relations of humanity, than with the unnatural devotion to itself, she falsely imagined, she was called upon to make!—How

did he pass thence into so tender and delicious a description of the delights of the pure love she was formed to inspire and to share, that even mine eyes distilled hot dews—that have not wept so long? Hers streamed with a balmier flow, I wot! But on a sudden she started as if a serpent had stung her, and with low, deep sobs, repeated nigh the words which you and Barbara have taught her—imploring him not to make her the betrayer of our blessed Lord—not to be the means whereby she should be cast, all helpless and abandoned of God and man, into the power of the cardinal!

"What was the rhapsody wherewith he answered her? As well strive to sever the torrent's rush through all its mingling waters! Something he spoke, but brokenly, as denying infinitely that such was his purpose! He was slandered, he said, by a wicked monk, whose own foul heart reeked up with worse imaginings, to his brain! Oh, how could he prove to her the falsehood of the calumny? Only by assuring her—as he did then and there, in a passion that himself confessed to master his reason, kneeling at her feet!—that he would rather perish a thousand deaths than endure the successful love of another for

her; attesting that he loved—oh, I know not how he loved her!—that he could no longer struggle with the passion which absorbed his soul—that he now perceived all the madness and unlawfulness of his own vows also, and was determined to cast them off as a devilish yoke and devised temptation of the fiend! And thereupon he demanded her love in return, and plighted promise to be his alone—hearken, my lord prior!—*in lawful marriage union*, for aye and ever united one!"

Sancgraal stared like a man who deems it impossible to believe what he hears, or one stunned by the shock of some overwhelming news. "In lawful marriage!—atheist, madman! of what dreams he? Is he not a priest, bound by irrevocable vows?"

"Yea; but as himself replied, when affrighted Lily—that was belike too frighted to flee—objected some such matter, in doucer terms—yea! but his father is legate supreme, and can unloosen all bonds, even were they, as she superstitiously deemed—so he said!—inviolable else! Yea, and that that father, despite of all contrary appearance, loved him, and desired his happiness!—yea, had doubtless relinquished his own vain and wicked pursuit—and would consent, on earnest entreaty, to

release both their pledges, and make them blessed as our first sires in Eden, in one another's possession!"

"And what answer made she then, to so fair a prayer?" said Sancgraal, in stormy tones of an endurance resolved to sustain the worst.

"What answer *could* she make to so goodly-visaged a prayer-maker?—Rest content! All manner of pretty nays and weeping cannot-be's—that ended after the old fashion!"

"How mean ye? She yielded?" muttered Sancgraal, in a choked undertone.

"Aye, she yielded!—to *become his wife*, monk!—not his despised and betrayed paramour, mark you, monk!—if heaven were so pleased that the cardinal's heart might be softened thereunto—for she confessed that she loved him also as dearly as it is in woman's heart to love! Methinks she lied in that, faint snowbud!—but she said so! And thereupon they plighted their eternal troth, and melting in each other's arms, their lips joined in such a kiss, I tell thee, monk! as lovers might who, disparted on the earth, met again in paradise!"

"Right holy, doubtless—purified of all taint by death—or that may be!" said Sancgraal, with a dread laugh, brief and sudden as the flash of flintstones in collision. But it seemed

as if he could not vanquish a feeling of incredulity. He inquired the same particulars over and over again, though in many different shapes; and Dan Gloria seemed on her part to luxuriate in repeating and enhancing the details of her information. No combination of circumstances could have been more unexpected, and apparently destructive to the plans of Prior Sancgraal. Even where he had established his strongest fortifications he was assailed; and, if it were possible to entertain the notion that Wolsey could be induced to play the part of an abettor in such a scheme, his mightiest defences, in Lily-Virgin's superstitious fears and credences, crumbled away! "But it cannot be!" he muttered hoarsely aloud. "It cannot be! Betrayer of the church as he is, and flagitious innovator, Wolsey surely cannot be brought to sanction the violation of all its most imperative obligations—the very foundations of her dominion! And doth he not cherish nefarious projects himself upon this wretched girl? It is but the madness and delirium of passion—or an artful covert devised by this false priest to advance his real purposes! Ay, it is so—it is so!—he will not relinquish the abbacy of Westminster on a baby's scruples! But,

Maudelyn, Maudelyn! we must baffle this felon's purposes, and preserve the betrothed of our lord from hideous profanation! There is no longer time to hesitate—not a moment, perchance! I confide nothing in his seeming virtue and fair pretences! Thou knowest our own path down the precipice was a snowily-cragged when we began the descent! Withouten doubt, heaven has chosen you as its instrument—ay, and worked the heretic's own villany to his destruction! To-morrow, when he preaches, I trust, he will still further raise the mask, for his audacity grows daily, and then—"

"What then?" interrupted Dan Gloria, with sudden vivacity.

"Why then, I will openly accuse him of his heresies, and demand the judgment of our new Defender of the Faith himself thereupon!" returned Sancgraal, with eyes that literally flashed with vindictive fury. "Only one dread hath hitherto—but no longer must—restrain mine accusation—the suspicions entertained of thee, which thereupon may take some dangerous and open form of retaliation! But if you will leave Westminster—England, for awhile—say, on your pilgrimage to Compostella, which you might make a joyous revel,

having all means of dispense and luxury at your command; then I can boldly advance my charges, which a cloud of witnesses will confirm—and rid us quickly of our heretic visitor!"

"Such a flight would confirm the worst our enemies could allege against me; and you forget I am the chief evidence against Roodspere!" returned Dan Gloria, coldly. "Quit Westminster? Certes, no; unless I shall see better reason than any now I do."

"Is it not enough, these black shadows of suspicion that haunt us! the danger of a discovery, which would confirm all the lies of the heretics—concerning Hunne and his doom! Old Gislebert's constant entreaties and reproaches?" said the prior.

"I will not stir, for any or all of these! It rejoices me well that the stony-hearted driveller, that cast me with ignominy forth of the sanctuary, as if I were not worthy even to consort with the thieves and parricides therein—in his turn, should now be a suppliant in vain! My discoveries are hostages for my safety with the cardinal, whose blood he cannot forget this discovered Lutheran is! And, for what thou callest the lies of the heretics, concerning Hunne and his doom—would to heaven

I could believe them even so!—These holy walls protect me from his avenging ghost, and I will not hence!"

"You rave, Maudelyn! but let it be in lower tones!" replied Sancgraal, much agitated. "Canst thou not believe me still when I tell thee, as oft before, Hunne perished by his own desperate hand? I did but seek to appal him into the avowal of his heresies, and the relinquishment of his purpose to accuse thyself and me before the tribunal appointed for his judgment! And if mine affrighted disguise and his own conscience worked like mad yeast in his brain, to his own destruction, that destiny only is to blame which he had made the god of his mad heresy! And why should I slay him, who nigh wrenched the sinews from mine arm to drag him over the abyss hence over the church, into which he would else have fallen! Were I his murtherer, what power could have given me the calm wherewith I consigned his carcass to the flames?—But what matters how he perished? Whether by the executioner's hand, or by another's nerved to the task by as forceful a conjunction of circumstances as that which first set the eternal sun rolling in the skies? He was condemned to a death more terrible,

by his heresies! Mercy and not vengeance would have put the means of death whereby he perished, in his hand, and cried despair! in his ear, until he arose and slew himself—as he did!"

"He was a heretic it is true, and merited his fate; let us speak no more of him! But, Sancgraal, I will go on no more pilgrimages—my last, to Rome, ended but ill!" replied Dan Gloria; "neither will I trust myself in the hands of any of your throttling rogues of the sanctuary, whom you purposed awhile agone to make my company, and who deem no crime unlawful which the Church will pardon, much less those she commands!"

"What, and dost thou fear *me?* In truth, thou hast outlived even the memory of our love!" said Sancgraal, with a mixture of bitter sadness, derision, and some darker thought that for a moment shadowed his countenance, and gleamed in his eyes like an assassin's steel in the moonlight.

"Have I not cause to fear thee, monk? It was with as fair promises, in tones as cajoling, that you lured me into the dungeons of the Nuns of the Sackcloth at Rome, whence only the swords and flames of the Lutherans rescued me!" returned Dan Gloria.

"It was my grievous necessity—the remorse of my violated vows—old Gislebert's reproaches and espial—that compelled me to what might seem to thee betrayal! How else could I have become Prior of Westminster, and have fulfilled, in anywise, the promises I freely confess I have made, and mean to keep?" said Sancgraal.

"How may that be? You are still in the harsh dotard's bondage! Abbot Islip lives; yourself are but the painting of a prior, powerless as Gervase of Blois himself upon his flagstone, with his mitre and staff of inlaid brass! But more than all that, Sancgraal, you no longer love or desire to retain me yours! You may deceive others, but not me; and believe me, from the very first of your plans on the daughter of the Paulets, I knew that it was an earthly, not a heavenly, passion impelled you on."

Sancgraal stood for several instants immovable and silent; but with what emotion it was not easy to determine. "Why, what a very woman fool are thou, to judge so foolishly!" he murmured, in a tone of dark irony. "Much more reasonably might I suspect such a Magdalen as thou art, of too great devotion to such a nimbus-crowned saint as Raphael Roodspere!"

"Oh, that it were given to me indeed to repent at the feet of the Master, as of old did Marie, sister of Martha!" ejaculated Dan Gloria. "But it cannot be; his doctrines slay all hope in my heart, and I must confide still in thine absolutions; and well I know whatever thine own offences, power is given thee to absolve and to forgive! But do not think, now that I have lost all for thee—husband, child, kindred, wealth, good name, almost my proper identity—to whistle me down the wind like a haggard hawk, which the falconer deems no longer worth its perch and meat. Never believe it, my lord prior! I crossed not mountains, rivers, and seas, left not the wealthy camp of the Lutherans, to return hither merely to depart hence when you were again aweary of me, or had found fresher game! I came, I tell thee, to be to thee even what I have heard say that among the wild Tahtar people of the far Muscovy the body of one murdered is, which is hung round the neck of the murderer till he perish also of his victim's rank contagion!"

"Ah, thou! what shall I call thee? To say all, in one word, thou woman!—how oft must I tell thee this girl is nothing to me but a means for the advancement of the church! The cardinal loves her—well, were she once

secured ours, her influence over him would preserve our threatened establishments — being, as she is, thoroughly imbued with the knowledge that they are the very salt of the else putrid earth ! But either I or thou must hence ! I can endure the shame and danger of thy presence no more ! Go, or I will hence into the countries of the Paynim —into the kingdoms of Mahound ! The turban and the scimetar will fit my head and hand much better than these toys of a mitre and powerless crozier !"

"Bad as thou art, wouldst thou betray thy God, too ?" returned Dan Gloria." The turban and the scimetar ! Had nature meant thee for a soldier thou hadst not been so long a pining monk ! Go to, thou wilt be what thou art to the close !—and what art thou ?"

There was a pause. Sancgraal seemed buried in meditation. "Wilt thou remain, then?" he said at last, with a ghastly expression, "now, as ever, my shame, my curse, and my betrayal !"

"Whatever I am, I will not hence though St. Edward rose from his sepulchre to drive me forth !" returned Dan Gloria. "Thou knowest I am weaponed, and that my dagger

is steeled by a firm hold, better than by the cold wave of the Tagus!—I have betrayed this apostle into your hands, as of old I did my husband, Hunne! What would ye more?"

"Thou dost betray like Judas—with a kiss!" said Sancgraal, "which is a dangerous office for Maudelyn Hunne!"

"It was not beauty tempted me when I fell!" returned Dan Gloria, with a glance of scorn, almost of hatred, at the prior. "But if the long devotion I have shown thee—the sacrifices I have made for thee—the forgiveness I have extended for my wrongs and desertion, be not sufficient to persuade thee of my fidelity, let this shameful garb be assurance that I am safe from all but a monk's profanity! He despises—he abhors me! yet he would save me from what he deems perdition!—and, by the cross of our Lord! I will not quit him while in this jeopardy."

"And yet but for thee—but for thee—I were now all unstained, and fit to meet this foeman, face to face, in arms!" groaned Sancgraal.

"Thou dost belie me, monk!" returned Dan Gloria, with wild vehemence. "When first I knelt at your feet, my soul was filled with spiritual dismay and grief—not as now

with crime and remorse! Remember by what crafty suggestions and promptings you wrung from me the secret of my sadness and despair! Remember, in what language, luxurious as a couch in the golden sunset, thou didst paint the brightness and happiness of the feigned spiritual love we were to share! The remission and pardon you promised for the sin passion sanctified! the silence, the solitude, the awe of your false sainthood—the belief it inspired! and answer who was the tempter, who the tempted, fiend?"

"Well, be it so—it was so; it was I!" said Sancgraal, alarmed at this passionate effusion. "But wouldst thou bring me, whom thou hast pretended so much to love, to doom? —And unless you depart, Maudelyn! I am as one who strikes in shackles, and but provokes destruction!"

"I cannot and I will not leave Westminster—but I will aid you in all your projects, and can—till either this new evangelist of ours must take flight, or remain to his utter ruin," replied Dan Gloria. "Nay, never glare at me with those flaming eyes, prior!—I know thou darest not cast me into the gulf below, because my body would be found there, and

condemn you worse than any declaration of your enemies!"

"No, Maudelyn, no!—I call all the saints to witness, I would not harm thee!—But if any blow is to be struck at this villain, thou must hence!—Since my birth, I have knelt to none earthly thing, but on my knees now I do beseech thee listen to this prayer, if thou wouldst save both of us—body and soul perchance—from the destruction that else awaits us!"

"I will not forth of Westminster again, come what come may!—Mayhap I would not that you should destroy this man—or would have my share in so meritorious a deed!—Yea, verily, I will not let you loose upon him, and take a journey, the which, belike, an arrow from a thicket shall suddenly end!" returned Dan Gloria. Sancgraal gave a strange glance towards her, and then to the range of narrow arches that let in the brilliant light of the transept, and commanded a precipitous bird's-eye view of the interior of the church. Then closing his eyes and knitting his brows, as if to shun some physical form of temptation, he said, in a low voice, "Be it even so!—remain, and let him consummate his crime!—But here are steps approaching;—perchance it is him-

self come to learn how lightly we set by his commandment!"

"No, it is not his footfall!" said the chorister. "Some of your evil and lethargic spirits are hither hastening in that dull tramp! But I will rid you of my presence, whosoever it be, and leave you to chew the cud of mine intelligence."

A footstep was audible in the clerestory at the same moment, and a gentle tap at the door followed. Sancgraal and the præcentor exchanged glances, and instantaneously the latter muffled herself in her hood, and sank in an attitude of prayer. The former hastened to open the door, and he admitted one who was apparently a stranger to him, in an ecclesiastical robe—a man in whose countenance morose and splenetic humour contended with an habitual effort at dissimulation and repression, under the guise of a malign smile. "Dominus vobiscum!—are you adread of the mischance of St. Thomas of Canterbury, good brother, that you keep yourself so high and dry up here?" was this visitor's somewhat easy and familiar address. At the same time he glanced backward with a shudder through one of the narrow arches that revealed the whole interior of the church, with the ex-

ception of the Lady Chapel, diminished by the height into an elaborate toywork.

"I cannot hope—and certes do not dread—to share any portion of that glorious martyr's crown!" replied the prior. "I have withdrawn hither in order that the noise and turbulence of the earth and of its denizens may not interrupt my devotion—ascending to mine ears but as the churning of the sea among the pebbles at the base of some mighty promontory! But, sir, though I return your brotherly salute, I know you not specially from any other brother in the love of our Lord."

"My name is Gardiner—his grace's secretary of the canon law—you know me now!" replied the visitor, and Sancgraal indeed looked visibly disturbed with the announcement. "But be not amazed, my lord prior; I do trust I am in no wise akin to my rancorous yokefellow, whom I wot well ye have good cause to hate and fear, persecuted brother!—A goodly height, in troth, to cast the devil from, if you had knotted his tail well, my lord prior!—I see that in all things you look like your reputation—the prickly furze for a couch, without one yellow blossom suffered to decay in it, lest it should infect

you with the love of pomp and ease!—A true Elijah, too, with your ravens!"

"Save that I feed the ravens—not the ravens, me, Dr. Stephen," replied Sancgraal, much surprised with the tone of this discourse. "Your coadjutor is verily in contrast with yourself in his demeanour among us!—May we then hope that your presence is an earnest that the indignation of our spiritual father, so wrongfully heated against us, begins to cool of its furnace rage?"

"I do trust so, my lord prior; I have done my part to that effect, and most feelingly represented to his grace how worse than a madness it is, in face of the enemy, and in the very thick of the fight, to fall to disbanding the oldest and trustiest of our battalia, for some trifling acts of insubordination!" replied Gardiner. "But I have a bitter opposer, and in all things, in the atheist Lutheran of whom I spoke; and he has prevailed, in a sharp encounter between us, that the cardinal should come among ye to-morrow, of a set purpose to ordain the opening of a court of inquisition, before your visitor, which is to be open and public to all the world, the better to defame and scandalize ye all! Wherefore I

would fain counsel ye to some such submission as shall otherwise content his grace, and—"

"I trust we shall come out of the furnace unscathed—even so; but I will surrender no right, no privilege of our church, to scape the ordeal," replied Sancgraal, turning lividly pale. "I do suppose some time will be allowed us to know of what we are accused, that we may have our disproof ready?—And meanwhile our visitor himself, we trust, shall be compelled to answer an accusation of the deadliest heresies, which do wholly unfit him for the judgment of others—and most of all, religious men!"

"How say you, brother? Can you libel your visitor of heresies?" returned Gardiner, with extreme eagerness.

"What say you, master secretary of the canon laws?—be these doctrines and assertions heretical or no?" returned Sancgraal, handing a manuscript, bound in monastic vellum, to the eager hand of Gardiner.

"I will right speedily determine!—But whom have we here listening so perkily with all his ears, in the stubble?" said Gardiner—the latter words in a whisper.

"Nay sir, it is but our præcentor, our chauntmaster. Master chorister, I am content

that you should sing the service as you have devised; and now you may hence on your own recreation!" said the prior, and Dan Gloria started from an attitude of intent observation, bowed deeply, and hastened to retire.

How! your præcentor? Master Cromwel hath never adone with his—commendation of *him!*" said Gardiner, giving an acute, pursed-browed stare at the chorister as he passed. "But I trow he is one you can trust, doubtless, my lord prior!—And now for these accusations of your Cambridge visitor! How is this, my lord? What manner of pretty limnings be these?"

"These are the temptations of St. Anthony, which, by mistake, I have given you, master doctor!" replied Sancgraal, colouring deeply—not without a cause—and almost snatching at the book, whose splendid but extremely gross illuminations had fixed the attention of Gardiner. "Nay, nay, brother! a moment, by your leave. Verily, your alluminor has painted these temptations as if he relished them! Ha, ha, the holy hermit deserved some praise for his repulse of this fiend, in so fair a womanly guise! But we all have our temptations, and the crown is given to few! I'll

warrant me now that even thus far out of all human haunting, you have been vexed of Satan with troublesome assays?"

"Yea, sir, even so! I do remember me how once the fiend put life into the beauteous golden image of Queen Eleanor on her tomb below, and sent her hither with kisses on her gilded lips to lure me into sin!" returned Sancgraal with a mystical solemnnity in his tone and manner that imposed even upon Gardiner, though the latter's expression seemed rather to question his sanity than to acquiesce in his pretensions. But the book which Sancgraal now substituted for the Legend of St. Anthony showed that his mind was at least in possession of all its faculties, in the accusation he had elaborated against Raphael Roodspere.

"That these propositions are heretical, no man, however ignorant of theology, can doubt!" said Gardiner, raising his eyes, sparkling with interest, from the *libellus* now offered for his perusal. "But mean you really and truly to aver, lord monk, that your visitor makes open professions of such utter pravity of doctrine?"

"Clouds of witnesses will confirm all herein set down—and much more!" returned

Sancgraal. "He has formed a faction in our abbey, it is true—chiefly among the younger members, who are impatient of the yoke of Christ; and in the schools, where he teaches his pestilent doctrines without restraint: but many faithful ones will yet bear testimony to the truth of what is here set on record against him—myself am witness of much! Under pretext of lecturing on the Greek tongue, he has established an open school of his heresies in the Cloisters, where, after the manner of the doctors of the age of Abelard, he expounds his interpretations to all who choose to listen; and you must have heard, Dr. Stephen, what a great resort to him there is, not only of the novices and pupils among us, but of the nobles of the court, and burghers of seditious and anabaptist London! On this arena only have I thought it meet to encounter with him—being thereto constrained by very anguish at the perversions of the truth I heard, though outwardly purposing only, forsooth, to seat myself at the feet of the new Gamaliel! I can assuredly witness that he denies all authority of traditions, or of the church, and makes his ultimate appeal to the Bible only!—and that translated and interpreted by his own new lights, often in a sense

contrary to the canonical interpretations! The rest, doubt not, can all be well affirmed!"

"Something I have heard of this—and the Boleyn faction, and the Duke of Suffolk, mightily rehearse his praises therein!" said Gardiner. "But Cromwel has won the cardinal to believe, despite of that proof, that it was but a wonted calumny of you monks here, to impute heresy to your visitor in his discourses!"

"The cardinal can judge with his own ears, if he list, to-morrow; for I know this man cannot speak — much less deliver a long harangue—without spilling of his venom!" said Sancgraal.

"Why then, Master Cromwel will come in time to think that he might have been better employed in my absence than in bringing back this young man to the favour and presence of the cardinal, purely to do me a mischief!—he will find it is not good for those who live in wattle huts to set their neighbours' biggins on fire! This Roodspere, sir, hath never forgiven me, and never can, for that I found it my duty inform his grace of certain reports current in his village to the effect that he was not truly the cardinal's unlawful issue, but the

bastard of his greatest enemy and ill-wisher, Sir Amias Paulet, who—"

"Sir Amias Paulet!—of Sir Amias Paulet!" said, or rather shouted Prior Sancgraal, at the pitch of his now hoarse-toned voice.

"Ay, sir, of one Sir Amias Paulet!—What amazes you therein? It is true that I have since seen reason to alter my opinion, and to believe in his grace's own report and full allowance, that this wild slip is in truth an off-shoot of his lordly stem: but at that time —in short, there is no doubt, and it behoves you to remember, that whatever you adventure against this man, you adventure against the cardinal's bastard, of a well-loved mother born!"

"But, minstrels and jongleurs can scarcely all lie who tell us, that there are no passions so remorseless and cruel as the ravening of slighted love and jealousy?" returned Sancgraal, in a dark rumination. "Ay, let us set this engine too at work! Dr. Stephen, there is an offence committed by this Roodspere I have not yet placed on the record, but which, if himself or his victim herself are examined, neither will deny! He hath won to his shameful love a betrothed virgin of heaven, and her name is Lily Paulet!"

"I came not for this purpose! I came but to inform you, lief brother, that his grace is pleased to command the service of the high mass of St. Edward to-morrow should be left to him and his priests! But our Lady forbid I should so far neglect my duty to holy mother church, as not to do as you bid me! But give me proofs—else it were too dangerous!" said Gardiner, after a pause of astonished delight.

"Be seated then, our kind protector! for my discourse must needs be something tedious," replied Sancgraal, and his worthy coadjutor immediately complied.

CHAPTER XX.

THE FEAST OF ST. EDWARD.

The Feast of King St. Edward the Confessor was usually celebrated in Westminster with all the pomp to be expected from the wealthiest monastery in England, rejoicing in the glory of a royal patron. It had popular attractions besides of a high order, being one of the greatest religious festivals of the country, which was, at the same time, a general holiday among the Londoners, and the occasion of a great mercantile gathering. The Abbey possessed the lucrative privilege of holding a three days' fair, annually, during the feast; and as devotion could thus be united with business, it was thronged to from all parts of England, and even from the Low Countries, and France and Germany, by pilgrims and traders of mingled hue. By ancient charter, the shops and places of commerce in London were ordered to be closed during this fair; and though so invidious a privilege was not

still attempted to be enforced, the great concourse of the citizens and populace all the time to Tothill Fields, where it was held, practically preserved it.

On this occasion, the Feast of St. Edward excited even more than customary interest. Since the return of Prior Sancgraal the displays in the church itself had been altogether unrivalled for splendour and a scenic skill that stirred the wonder and admiration of the rude populace in the highest degree. But a political significance seemed added to the event by the portentous glimpses lately afforded into Wolsey's intrigues, and the announcement that the queen intended to offer the special homage of a pilgrimage on foot from the palace to the shrine. As the contest between the Abbey and Wolsey was now generally known, this was taken as a public sign of the long-rumoured hostility between the queen and the towering churchman, and proper to confirm the still more important whisperings that agitated men's minds, of a darker and more dangerous design afoot in his policy. The queen's devotion, extreme as it was, and respect for the saintly character of Prior Sancgraal, could not sufficiently account, in the popular view, for the manifestation. But

not even the royal visit altogether justified the extraordinary pomp with which the monks of Westminster prepared to celebrate their festival, as if in defiance of the species of interdict they were placed under. All the preparations were on the grandest scale, and combined every circumstance that could be devised by the most ingenious, to give interest and solemnity to the spectacle. Every entrance to the abbey church was thrown widely open, and displayed from all points of view the most impressive magnificence of decoration. A million tapers burned daylight throughout its extent, illuminating every altar, shrine, and chapel, and dispelling the gorgeous twilight of the painted windows with a golden radiance. The rich plate and relics enshrined in precious casings, appertaining to each of these, were displayed in dazzling profusion wherever the glance turned, each attended by its proper custodian, in the rich state robes worn on the saint's festival by all the abbatial officials. A wonderful profusion of flowers—considering the season of the year—and endless wreaths of evergreens garlanded the whole church. The high altar might be said to be one mighty nosegay — it was tapestried indeed with a moveable screen of ivy and flowers, all of a

white hue, in honour of St. Edward's chastity. The priceless treasury belonging to the saint was thereupon displayed, in every variety of fine goldsmith's work, and massive ornament —to the awe and admiration of the people, but also to the cupidity and envy of less superstitious beholders.

A throne, canopied with cloth-of-gold, was placed, in evident preparation for the royal guest, at the end of the choir, facing the altar. The Queen's device, of the cleft pomegranate, was embroidered in gold on the purple velvet that composed the cushions and coverings of the chair of state. A low stool, or tabouret, was prepared for the Princess Mary, at her mother's feet. The abbot's seat was removed to the right of the choir on a lower estrade—and he or his representative, the prior, and the monks of Westminster, were the only persons for whom such accommodation was provided. The etiquette of the age, in fact, allowed no other than religious personages to be seated in the presence of the sovereign, on occasions of public solemnity. Yet it was evident from the number of banners that hung drooping from the galleries, that a great concourse of distinguished individuals from the neighbouring court, intended to pay their homage to St.

Edward. It might very well have been suspected that the courtiers gladly availed themselves of an opportunity to evince tacitly their dislike of the cardinal legate, by respect for his clerical adversaries.

Roodspere declined to make one in the procession of the dignitaries of the abbey, who were to receive the queen; but he was among those who entered the church earliest, and he took a station where he thought it likely he should be allowed liberty of motion, and an opportunity of attracting the cardinal's notice. The chapel of St. John the Evangelist, siding the grand entrance at Solomon's Porch, apparently offered the facilities he required, as well as comparative seclusion. There he stationed himself, and continued to await the progress of events, not without anxiety, but with a glow of hope and passion that surrounded him like a splendid hallucination in some mad poet's phantasy. And what is love else?

Dan Gloria's revelation to Prior Sancgraal was founded strictly in fact, and the priest, Raphael Roodspere, and the novice, Lily Paulet, stood plighted, by the fondest vows of love, to become each other's under the sanction of a marriage contracted openly and in the face of day, in spite of the barriers that condemned

them apparently to perpetual isolation. In spite, shall we say, or with a hope to surmount them by means which only so blind a god could have pointed out as not merely possible but feasible? Love had removed the last relic of superstition from Roodspere's cleared spirit; but he found it necessary to persuade Lily-Virgin—ay, and to believe so himself—that their passion might receive a lawful sanction, and the restraint of their condition be abrogated. He had won her to believe—and hoped so himself, in every fibre—that Wolsey would remove, as he had the power, the trammels that weighed upon them, and give his sanction to a lawful union between a woman for whom he had himself cherished an unlawful passion, and a son whose whole existence had been to him a burden, a reproach, and a danger.

And yet Roodspere might be said to have some reason in his delirium, and to have fashioned his arguments from a most ingenious series of premises. Wolsey's own passion for Lily-Virgin, he resolved to believe, was a momentary libertine fancy, effectually checked by her visible abhorrence and rejection, or dissipated in the infinite variety and allurements that surrounded him. What could one poor ewe-lamb be to this lord of so many flocks—

the potent minister to win whose smiles the brightest and most beautiful women, in two splendid courts, lavished every resource of fascination and coquetry? Since the memorable detection of his projects at York Place, he had in no manner manifested any continued interest in his ravished prey. In spite of the reports, Roodspere could scarcely doubt, that must have reached his ear, of his own proceedings, Wolsey had in no wise interfered, much less exhibited any signs of jealousy, or even of misgiving on the subject. The passions more natural to his age and vehement spirit of ambition — Roodspere persuaded himself — had superseded every other in his breast! The whirl of business and pleasure had drifted him far beyond that one stilly depth which refused to mingle with his violent and turbid wave— and on whose azure tranquillity, Roodspere had spread the snowy cygnet wings of his love, in bliss and hallowed calm.

Even a circumstance that should have rudely shocked the tenor of his conclusions, lent them a smooth force. Wolsey had taken no further notice of him from the hour of his dismissal from York Place, and was very evidently anxious to keep him aloof. But Roodspere recalling all the fondness he had for-

merly shown him, and coupling it with the sway of the superstitious fancies his sire had imbibed concerning him, persuaded himself very readily that the Cardinal would be pleased with an opportunity of settling his fortunes advantageously, and in a manner that must remove him from any possibility of damaging his great scheme of exaltation. To release him from the priesthood, and wed him to the daughter and heiress of the Paulets, would accomplish both results. It would even become possible for Roodspere to serve, in some civil capacity, a man for whom, in the depths of his heart, he still cherished a strong degree of attachment. And all that was necessary, was, that Wolsey should pronounce the few magic words which, on his lips, became the fiat of law and of ecclesiastical right. There could be no doubt of the result when pleaded with the eloquence that Roodspere hoped would befriend him in his need, and he had already found that passion had vivified inert powers he scarcely suspected in himself, and given him a species of dominion over all he approached in the words of persuasion that flowed to his lips.

There were many circumstances of annoyance in his present position that contri-

buted to increase the ardour of Roodspere's hope of success in the great project of emancipation he had formed. He was weary of his office in the abbey—disgusted with its futility and toil. By nature of a sociable and benevolent turn, he felt himself ill at ease in a society where he was regarded as a spy and an intruder—an object of dread and suspicion to almost every individual of a numerous body of men. The revelations he was continually making heightened all his original feelings against the system he laboured to suppress, to something nigh akin to abhorrence. But no visible resistance was tendered to his authority that could have justified its severe exercise, though he was conscious of an occult and silent opposition gradually strengthening and cementing around him, like the slowly contracting prison of the Italian tyrant. He knew that he was an object of perpetual espial, and of malignant report. The warmth of his feelings and convictions, he was well aware, continually led him to the brink of dangerous chasms! He was surrounded by acute, determined, and unscrupulous enemies! Above all the mystery attached to Dan Gloria had become to him an appalling and hideous enigma, from whose contemplation and solution he

would as fain have escaped as the unlucky encounterers of the Sphinx would have fled from her inexplicable form, and riddles of destruction!

Arrived at this point, in a solitary meditation, it may be imagined that Roodspere distinguished with little satisfaction the voice of Dan Gloria, murmuring, in low but exquisitely sweet modulations—according to his custom—some ballad-words in his ear:—

"Why weep'st thou, pilgrim, pilgrim gray?
Why fall those tears like melting snow?
Hear'st thou not how the minstrels play?
See'st thou not how the altars glow?
King Edward holds a feast to-day
His minster's holy rites to pay!

"Ten years King Edward, stone by stone,
Piled hath his church so nigh to heaven!—
And now, all glorious from his throne,
With all his nobles newly shriven,
His maiden wife held in his hand,
He comes to give it to the land!

"Alack, alack; go bear this ring,
And say, it is a token true,
Ere to his church comes Edward King,
He shall be sainted, 'bove the blue!
Evangelist St. John am I
To warn him sent, he now must die!"

"You do stand on the very spot where stood St. John, in the disguise of a pilgrim, when he came to Westminster and asked alms of St. Edward—and afterwards returned to warn him that his hour was at hand!" said Dan Gloria, with peculiar—with somewhat malicious—significance.

"I know the legend!—of how the charitable king, lacking gold, drew his ring from his finger, and gifted the beggar withal—and of how St. John promised, as the greatest thanks he could make, to send it back to him as a token when the hour of his death drew nigh!" said Roodspere, impatiently. "But why do you pursue me in all my private walks and meditations? I have told ye oft, I desire not such page-like attendance at my heels, master chorister!"

"St. Edward needed but one day to have seen his church in all its glory—yet heaven could not spare him that out of all the centuries of time! Is it worth while to be of heaven's favourites, then, since it guerdons them only with crosses and afflictions?—But I come, master visitor, on my usual and too vain purpose—to bid you beware how you give our monks further handle against you—for their fellness has been long a-ripening, and

will, perchance, this day come to be garnered in!"

"I am guarded better than by the spears of a thousand men-at-arms, in mine own approving conscience!—your scorpions do but sting themselves!" returned Roodspere.

"Remember, howbeit, that I bade you beware—and when need is, that you have an assured friend, even in so poor a one as the chorister, Dan Gloria! But the mouse once freed the ensnared lion!" said the præcentor, adding, with eagerness, "After your sermon we are to have a miracle play, of my lord prior's device. You have seen my face oftener than any other in this abbey, but I doubt me if you will know me in the disguise I am to wear therein! I am to be Madame Eve that ate the apple in paradise—and you will marvel to see how we of Italy can attune and shape us to our parts!"

"Madame Eve?" said Roodspere, and with some visible surprise internally, occasioned by what he almost began to conclude, the hazardous identity of sex to be ventured on. But Dan Gloria mistook the nature of his sentiment.

"Our monks suffer no women to enact the parts in their miracle plays—and I am chosen

because I am nigh beardless—but I would know from you hereafter what you think of my dissemblance of that sex's wily and wicked ways!—I win Adam, look you, to eat perdition on himself and all mankind!" he said, with a dark flush, adding abruptly, "but here comes one, who for some reason of his own, loves me not, and I will hence!"

As he spoke, Cromwel drew nigh, guided to Roodspere by one of the novices; and in spite of Dan Gloria's haste to retreat, he managed to intercept him on his way to the choir, a few steps from St. John the Evangelist's Chapel. "Well met, master chorister!" he exclaimed, in a very different manner from the one he had formerly adopted. "I meant to have spoken to your friend, Master Roodspere, what now I better can to your own lips. Know then, I have so often praised your singing to his grace, who loves all things pertaining to delight, that he bade me say, if he liked of your minstrelsy, he would have you to York Place, at a feast he means to give the king—and do what further in him lies to your profit and advancement!"

"I humbly thank his grace," replied the præcentor, very coldly; "but it hath been my ill luck since I abode in this land to

quarrel with a man, and split his heart with my knife!—wherefore I shall not quit the roof and shelter of St. Edward, until you bring me my foeman back, sound and alive again, to kiss and make friends!"

"I could as easily bring you back Marchant Hunne, in his bodily form, with his long grizzled beard, and his eyes that burst out in the flames, looking for his pretty wife in the Sanctuary!" returned Cromwel—and the præcentor in a manner vanished from his gaze, in the rapidity of his passage onward. Cromwel then joined Roodspere, whom he saluted with cordiality, but scarcely with the frankness of their earlier acquaintance. Of late, a degree of coldness had arisen between the two, which was somewhat justified, on Cromwel's part, by Roodspere's inattention to his advice, and the little progress he made in any of the serviceable plans he had most at heart. On Roodspere's, it was chiefly caused by aversion to the intriguing and unscrupulous means urged by Cromwel on his agency—and some vague sentiments of uneasiness as to what the latter's impressions would be on ascertaining his success where he himself had made so great a failure.

"This fellow shuns me still!—if fellow it

be—as if I were the Nile rat nosing out his crocodile's eggs!" he muttered; adding, with somewhat of a bitter smile, "Now, out upon you, master visitor, not to have learned us of his tidings ere now!—Why, I, whom he never sees but to run from, have almost arrived at my conclusions, merely by observation! In the very cloisters, when you are railing at the monkeries in Greek, *she* sits gazing at you with as lovesick eyes, from her hood, as if she were all the ballad damsels gone distraught, in one! But you are so busy at Clerkenwell—you spy nothing under your nose! How doth my lady prioress there?—and when can she spare you a little of your time to do your offices here?"

"Nay, sir, she hath therein none or little part to yield," said Roodspere, colouring; "but I desire to be still less acquainted with her—and purpose very speedily to resign both my resort thither, and visitation here!"

"Nay, man, nay!—let not Gardiner, who frighted your mother on her deathbed with all manner of threats and terrors, to compel her to a lie against her only child, win the day thus!" exclaimed Cromwel, very earnestly. "All otherwise goes well with us as a roasting goose! The cardinal is fairly dazzled with

the discovered wealth of our prey—and yet, until to-day, myself had no notion of the abundance of their havings, in plate and jewellery only! I have been from altar to altar, making a silent inventory in my tablets of all their treasures, so that when we come to our inheritance, they shall not rob us of a single ounce, silver or gold. And now we need money more than ever to prevail at Rome! Have patience yet a little longer! I have worsted Gardiner in the keenest tussel we have had as yet—and the cardinal has resolved this day to appoint you his judge on certain charges and accusations which I have duly arranged, from various sources of information, against them. Ye wot well, master visitor, that, in our courts, only the accusation, not the accuser, needs be produced: but Gardiner has achieved to have the charges privily examined, under pretext of the universal scandal that would accrue to churchmen were they openly proved: and the cardinal, who desires only to have the monks at his mercy — in readiness for old Islip's slip—lent a willing ear. But in truth his superstitions are still so flintily bedded that my ploughshare is continually turned! Yet I think we can turn the occasion favourably—and mayhap bring down

Hunne's ashes in a fiery shower on his murtherers!"

Roodspere sighed; but the considerations urged were so cogent, above all the necessity of completing the destruction of Sancgraal's still mighty influence over Lily-Virgin's mind, occurred so forcibly to him, that he could not refuse acquiescence. "But, mayhap, harsher measures may not be needed if you deem you can recognise your Roman Dalilah in her proper woman's garb?" he observed, with some lingering sentiment of compassionate hesitation. "The præcentor is to enact the part of Eve in a miracle play, after my discourse. And were Dan Gloria once aware that *her* secret is discovered, I deem that I have oft seen in her such signs of contrition and attention to my exhortations, that perchance she would consent to purchase pardon for herself, by the full discovery of her betrayer's iniquities!"

"Can it be possible? Why then indeed they are blinded to their own destruction by the gods!" exclaimed Cromwel. "Be only careful, my bee among the hornets, to throw no stumbling blocks in our way in your harangue, and leave the rest to me! Nay, to give them the greater confidence, I will fain to leave before the play begins, and 'tis well enough

known I love not the monkish desports! Yet such madness of audacity something troubles me, lest, after all, I have wasted so much good wit and conjecture on an idle phantasy!"

Roodspere sighed again, and still more deeply; but it was not then for the first time he discovered that he had lost the courageous singleness of his purposes; and that, since the safety of another so much dearer to him than his own, was involved in it, he had no longer the challenging audacity of purpose which might once have rendered Cromwel's counsel very needful; but who that loved—and loved so passionately—could have cast the first stone at him? From the least valuable of gifts, life had become to him the most precious—the golden key that unlocked the gates of paradise!

In the midst of the dialogue that followed on between the coadjutors, the entrance door from the cloisters opened, and the monks arrived in procession to take up a suitable position to receive their royal visitor. All the officials wore their state robes, and the canons what were called their "gold-copes," being long mantles of the richest brocade, over their black and white costume. Prior Sancgraal headed these, and though his ascetic sackcloth robe and cilice were still sufficiently visible,

he wore over them a stole of a most gorgeous though very ancient embroidery, set with an extraordinary lustre of gems, and emblazonings of various kinds. Tradition scrupled not to affirm that this was the very dalmatica, or bishop's mantle, worn by St. Peter when he consecrated the church, and which was left by him as a present and an evidence! It might well have been the gift of some pious prince of the earliest Norman era, perhaps of William the Conqueror, who heaped attentions on the church dedicated to the saint whose heir he pretended to be. Sancgraal wore it now as the abbot's representative; and also the mitre and crozier that asserted the Abbey's claims to episcopal rank and independence. But he carried them in a humble, slouchant manner, as if averse to the distinction they conferred. He looked indeed but little better able now to support them than the worn-out old man who was borne in on his couch to take a glimpse of the glories of his beloved church, but evidently with no intention of remaining to balance the prior's supremacy. Abbot Islip, staring with almost sightless eyes, and propped on pillows, was carried in, and borne round the ambulatory of the chapels; whence he returned to his invalid tranquillity in the Abbey. But not without receiving on all

hands marks of a respect and affection which his benevolent character and mildness of rule had deservedly achieved among the whole dependency and vassalage of Westminster. Cromwel knew not whether to be pleased or no on observing the friendly salute exchanged between the visitor and the abbot, though he had already learned that Roodspere speedily managed to overcome Islip's prejudices against him personally. But the visitor's openly declared desire to suppress St. Edward's festival altogether, had checked their friendly intercourse until it was resumed on this occasion. The aged abbot had entirely forgotten the circumstance.

A third party joined Roodspere and Cromwel as the abbot proceeded on his tour of inspection. It was Almoner Benson. With ill-concealed bitterness, mingled with alarm, he informed the twain that he had not been invited to make one in the procession to receive the queen—which neglect he ascribed to the malice of Dan Gloria, the præcentor. He had accidentally observed and challenged him, descending from the prior's hermitage, on the previous evening—and was now more than ever convinced that his pretended service and

following of the visitor was, in reality, a craftily veiled system of espionage!

"We shall remedy all this soon, master almoner, if you will utter your whisperings concerning this foreigner aloud!" said Cromwel. "And to strengthen you, I may inform you that his grace is very much of your opinion how expedient it would be to have a friend and servant of his own in the office of treasurer in this Abbey — who will keep the accounts in some intelligible figures! And if it shall be proven that old Gislebert has formed a private store of his own, out of the Abbey's revenues, there shall be as good reason for his deprivation as can be desired!"

"But I say not—to his own private uses! —What hoarding he may have made is doubtless all to some good purpose—such as forwarding our plaints at Rome—or bribing some greedy ones among ourselves to support his holy pupil's elevation!" said the almoner, submissively. "True it is, our rule forbids all apart property—and this may nigh be considered as such, since he and the prior dispose of our superfluity at their own unquestioned will and pleasure.—But what is to be done, master secretary?—If his grace gives me assur-

ance, I will speak the truth, to the best of my limited knowledge thereof!"

While Cromwel was instructing his faithful but fearful ally upon this question, Sancgraal and his monks drew up in regular array, in two lines, at the entrance of the Beautiful Gate. The prior himself, buried in sombre meditation, with his eyes firmly fixed on the ground, stood in the centre, at the farther end of the lines. The exterior, and a passage through the churchyard, was kept by the armed vassalage of the Abbey, chiefly yeomen and rustics, furnished with cross bows and billhooks, who were bound by their tenures to serve their lords in this military guise when required. A great rabble of the Sanctuary men who crowded the churchyard, offered additional security to the monks of Westminster. A miscellaneous concourse meanwhile traversed the open space, without ceasing, to enter by the west gates of the church, where all who presented themselves were admitted.

In the bright blaze of sunshine pouring in at the open portals where he stood, the influence of ascetic privations, or of the inward furnace of passion that consumed his life-blood, was very visible in Sancgraal's aspect.

Nevertheless he betrayed no exterior sign of emotion—and he scarcely even raised his eyes when an increasing murmur among the multitude, and the bursting into a joy-peal of the bells of the Abbey, announced the approach of the queen.

The royal procession was headed by a body of men-at-arms, in the costume still worn by the yeomen of the guard, with red and white roses round their steel caps. The queen came on foot, and consequently her whole attendance also walked; but the distance between the palace and the abbey was so short as scarcely to make the journey more than a ceremonial of humility. Her retinue was not by any means numerous—whether already the decline of her fortunes was perceptible to the keen vision of the courtiers, or by her own desire to avoid unnecessary parade. She led her daughter by the hand, and the Duke of Norfolk walked at the other. A barefooted Carmelite, her confessor, followed close on her steps, and after him came a group of elderly and staid matrons, all of high rank. These were succeeded by a more interesting assemblage of the queen's maids of honour; and the whole procession was closed by the gentlemen belonging to her household—men evidently of an almost Spanish

gravity and decorum. But it was observed by acute politicians that the queen's dress was unusually gay for her—as if to contradict a report which began to be diffused that she had formed an intention of retiring into a nunnery. Or was it in honour of the chaste king merely that she wore robes altogether of white velvet, embroidered with silver, and trimmed with ermine throughout its lengthy train? A diadem of great brilliancy also glistened on her stately brow, over the long black—or rather now grizzled—hair which she wore, after the Spanish fashion, in flowing tresses to her girdle. Hair once the theme of courtly adulation, and of the popular wonder and admiration, almost equally! If Katharine's gloomier taste appeared at all conspicuously in her array, it was probably only in a string of beads, formed of grinning little ivory skulls, about the size of snowberries, which she carried on her bare and still rounded arm, and seemed to count at every leisure moment.

Katharine of Aragon was at this period far in the decline of the great but saturnine beauty she had once possessed, inherited from her mother, Isabel the Catholic. But suffering, bodily and mental, had done more than time to mar the noble characteristics of her phy-

siognomy, to hollow the receptacles of her large, mournful eyes, and somewhat to detract from the height and majesty of her person. Yet neither griefs nor years had deprived her countenance of its dignified and truly royal expression of mingled benignity and supremacy, and had but increased the matronly sweetness and high gravity of aspect under which the people now, with its strange intuition, read the deep sorrows of the wife and queen of Henry VIII. A murmur that could not be called of applause—the people of that age had not learned to treat their sovereigns with the ovations of histrions who stride and strut to the popular fancy—but of some sentiment deeper, and infinitely more respectful, greeted the queen's entire progress. Neither was it to be analysed into an expression of compassion, curiosity, or of popular sympathy exclusively; these ingredients were in the compound, but were so lost in the dominant feeling of veneration, almost of awe, inspired by the august personage and character of the queen, that history only has decisively distinguished the elements of the great national sentiment which doubtless accompanied Katharine in all the stages of her misfortunes.

The Princess Mary, a sallow, ill-looking girl

of twelve years, whose expression already presaged her life of bigoted gloom and misery, walked beside her mother, crossing herself at frequent intervals, from the moment when she caught sight of the church. Katharine finding her own consolation chiefly in religion, and misled by her own education, rendered her child the abject slave of its formulas, lacking her own power to extract their uses and essence. The melancholy child, debarred all childish delights, was already her father's aversion, and the indistinct apprehension of the people. But one destined to exercise a much mightier influence on their destinies, followed in the queen's train—in fact, was one of its bearers—whom on the contrary every spectator's eye selected and dwelt upon with a mixture of delighted wonder and admiration. This was Anne Boleyn.

At the date we write of, this celebrated beauty, who changed the history of the world by the influence of her charms, was in their fullest lustre—about five-and-twenty years of age—in all the dazzle of those fascinating qualities of accomplishment and wit which, in conjunction with her marvellous fate, make her the fit heroine of the strangest romance ever devised by that great legendary—reality.

These latter attributes, rather than mere personal loveliness indeed, gave her the supremacy she had already established in the court of Henry VIII., which abounded in beautiful women. Her features were very regular and finely chiselled, yet they might have been objected to as too long in the profile; and her complexion was so deeply brunette that but for the glow of the bright blood in the cheeks, the brilliant sparkle in the eyes, the gaiety and volatility of thought that played in varying lights in its expression—it might have been held too brownly dark in a beauty of the north. But her main charm could not be singled out—it was diffused all over her—like the glow of a rich sky over a landscape, like the colouring of a flower, like the spell of a sweet and linked melody! It gave a magic to her least gesture and smile, a music to her laughter, an indescribable power to the playful lightning of her glance! She seemed to wear invisibly the cestus that gave the dominion of beauty to the foamsprung goddess of the Greeks. A spell of fascination hung upon her every movement—it was not possible to say whence derived—unless from a spirit of poetical coquetry that gave her an almost universal desire to please, and a species of in-

spiration to every lavish gift bestowed by nature for the purpose. This was the infinite charm which the gross and sensual Henry could not, after all his pains and expectation, possess—and made him find the cloud only where he thought to grasp the goddess. But he knew how to avenge the disappointment as materially as its occasion!

Her dress alone might have attracted notice, from its French vivacity and sparkle, in a court to which the Spanish tastes of the queen gave a tone of sober and even gloomy magnificence. Anne wore the plumed and jewelled hat, the long hanging sleeves, and low-bosomed boddice, in vogue in the voluptuous court of Francis I. The new maid of honour's preference of the French costume was the first occasion of distaste on the part of her royal mistress. But finding that the king took favourable notice of it, Katharine, who carefully humoured his caprices on all points compatible with her own dignity, permitted it gradually to become the reigning mode among the younger members of her court. But none of all the numerous copyists could approach the splendour of the original, however surpassing her in the means and appliances of wealth, for the knight, her

father, though so nearly connected with the greatest families in the realm, was not rich, and had a numerous family besides. The fashion of her garments owed much of their perfection to the exquisite contour of the person they fitted, and the most careful analysis of the eye could have detected no other reason why the lady in orange-coloured satin, with a knot of marigolds, set in a dark relief of ivy, in her bosom, should attract and rivet every eye, from so many competitors among the beauteous bevy that accompanied the queen. The season was very late for this flower, yet either her nosegay was most admirably imitated artificially, or the audacious beauty had purposely husbanded the resources of her own and her friends' gardens, to present herself with the cognisance she had adopted in very defiance of Wolsey's scornful comparison. It was observable that among the crowd of young cavaliers and courtiers who followed in the queen's wake, a very considerable number wore a flower of the same unusual kind, either in their caps or doublets, or embroidered in their cloaks, as if in homage to her who bore the bunch. And these cavaliers of the marigold were the most remarkable for wit and talent in the court—comprising

many whose names were destined to be written in blood with that of Anne herself! Among these was to be reckoned her brother, George Boleyn, and a fortunate exception in the tragedies of Anne's numerous admirers, in the person of Sir Thomas Wyatt.

The queen was received with the lowliest homage by the monks of Westminster, kneeling in a phalanx before her, with the prior in the front. She raised him immediately with her own hand, observing—as if intending to be generally heard—in her sonorous and very slightly foreign tones: "Nay, my lord prior, it were fitter rather that I, your woful penitent, should kneel before you! But lead me to the blessed shrine, that I may beseech of holy Edward's pity some consolation in my sore afflictions—at this breach of peace between my lord the king, and my well-loved cousin and nephew, the emperor! Our daughter will kneel with us."

"My liege lady and penitent! I do rather beseech of you to let me have a brief private audience with you!—I have matter of infinite moment, for your royal hearing only, which even my lady princess must not be privy to, —for her own peace's sake, perchance!" replied Sancgraal, in an undertone audible only

to the queen, in the midst of the movement reigning in all directions in the church.

Katharine glanced with surprise at the prior, and turned pale as she marked the expression of his countenance. "What is ado, my lord? What worse misfortune than any we have yet encountered, awaits us?" she murmured; but after an instant's meditation, she turned to the aged Countess of Salisbury—the same who was afterwards destined to have her head hacked from her shoulders for the crime of being the mother of Reginald Pole—and desired her to lead her daughter to her place. "And let all our retinue take also such as is assigned them, without confusion or murmur. We will, for special causes, pay our devotion to St. Edward alone.—Nay, father, without even your accompaniment." She spoke and looked at the Carmelite, her confessor in ordinary, as he might be called, Friar Forrest, who at a subsequent time was to be burned for his fidelity to her, and to the cause of the church he belonged to. He bowed his venerable head meekly, as recognizing the superior powers and supremacy of the prior, without a murmur, and conscious that they would be directed to the general advantage. The queen then, passing through the opening and

bending ranks of the crowds filling the transept, followed the prior into the ambulatory.

"And this is the club-footed, devilish monk, George, who hath persuaded Percy I am a heretic, and whom, therefore—however willing to do our sallow uncle of Norfolk a good turn, and knit him to Northumberland through me—he will not be the means to tie him unto!—Oh, that I had the means to do him, and all his fellows, a meet courtesy in return!—I were heretic enow in sooth to send them all back the way they came, to the devil and Rome!' murmured Anne Boleyn, to her brother, whose arm she had taken the moment she was released from her office of trainbearer.

"And I would buy them a good wind of a Lapland witch, if it cost me half mine inheritance, which is yet not like to be too plentiful, sweet sister!" replied Boleyn. "Yet would to God I had not thought so much of that, nor wedded me to yonder beetle-browed young hag, who can brew wilder storms in a house than ever the north wizards set the seas boiling in!—Look at her even now!—by my fay, she stares as jealously at us as an thou wert my Lady Wingfield, or Frances Colville, who vowed before a whole audience she would

rather be my leman than a king's lawful bride!"

"I like her not—nor her narrow, pointed eyes, that do seem to drill holes in all she looks upon!—Yet, George, you give her too much occasion for anger, and even now methinks should rather have offered her your arm than me!—I am not so much to seek for a cavalier!" replied Anne, with a smile half vivacious and half reproving.

"Nay, if you rail at me, too—I will leave you altogether to Wyatt's company, which, being a married man, and your infinite admirer, you do, we all well observe, most constantly eschew!" replied Boleyn.

"Nay, brother, nay—I do but like and listen to his verses!—Who quarrels with the blackbird for harbouring him in our orchards, while he sings so sweetly?" said Anne, with a smile and a slight blush.

"Heaven grant the crafty prior at least keep the secret well!" returned Boleyn, in a more serious tone. "We were all in a strange pass should the king discover it!"

"I would forgive him an he betrayed me to the queen only, whose suspicions and chill courtesies grow daily worse to bear!" said Anne, with petulant vehemence. "But where

is this marvellous scholar of the cardinal's, whom you call the Martin of Westminster—the first swallow that brings the summer!—who, under pretence of teaching Greek, expounds the Scriptures scripturally?"

"I observe him not as yet, but he will preach to-day, and yourself may judge of his qualities, who, they tell me, would oft attend Madame Marguérite in disguise, to hear Calvin rail!" replied Boleyn, after an anxious glance around. "Ah, yonder he stands! I will go and bring him hither, with the news that the most beautiful and wittiest lady in England, albeit my sister, desires to hold parley with him!"

Such was in truth nearly the manner of the invitation George Boleyn laughingly conveyed to Roodspere, who, wearied with the almoner's inexhaustible scandals, had glided off on some pretence from his and Cromwel's company. His acquaintance had already been claimed and renewed by George Boleyn, in the course of the lectures he delivered in the Cloisters; and the noble qualities of his intellect, and the charm of his person and demeanour, had won upon Roodspere's friendship in spite of his knowledge of the cardinal's dislike of the whole family. It was impossible

to live in the neighbourhood of the court without hearing much of the sister to excite curiosity—and it would have been so uncivil to refuse the proffered honour that Roodspere knew not how to do so—and after a moment's hesitation followed Boleyn to her presence.

They found her now surrounded by what might very well have been styled her court, consisting of a numerous throng of young nobles and gentlemen, who all of them wore her badge of the marigold. One of these, of a noble and graceful personage, was reciting some verses which George Boleyn whispered to Roodspere they would not interrupt, if they lasted not too long. "For Wyatt's verses have the very honeyclag upon them of the Italian Petrarca's, who loved a lady all his life, because he could not win her!" he smilingly observed, while the poetical cavalier continued, in a low, sweet, amorous undertone, the following recitation:—

"The marigold of heaven, the glorious sun,
Is but a pallid mimicry of ours;
His golden rays but imitate earth's one,
Which hath dethroned the rose, once queen of flowers!
And as his brightness shines amidst the bowers
When they are dabbled thick with lustrous dew,
So shines my hope amid the tearful showers
That do confess a fear, but not a rue!—

The marigold that glistens on my breast,
  Within my heart, a glowing sun doth burn!
When will it flame itself away to rest?
  Alas! the sparks will fire my funeral urn,
  Mine ashes into red hot embers turn!
Yet earthly suns should know it for a truth,
  Then light is love! No love then and no light
Therefore, because thou hast no loving ruth,
  Thou art our sun, and yet thou mak'st our night!"

"Why, what a tune on a wet crystal is this —jingle, jingle, jingle still!" said Anne, laughing gaily at this effusion, whose elaborate conceits and poetical fervour of meaning, combined something of the faults and merits of the style of the age. "Ah, you will never any of you pass me King Francis's gallant *chanson* in mine honour, which all Paris sang for four-and-twenty hours after! The beginning was as nothing to the end, yet it ran thus:—

"Vénus n'était blonde, comme on dit,
  On voit bien qu'elle est brunette!"

"He had not seen my Lady Wingfield, then, sister," said George Boleyn, smiling over at an exceedingly fair lady, in rich attire, whose swimming blue eyes had long in vain been seeking his.

"Was not Venus goddess of all manner of

loose disport? I should not care to be so likened!" said a voice full of sharp-edged tones, proceeding from a young but sallow and vindictive-looking woman, richly but stiffly dressed, who had now joined in the gathering around Anne.

"O, my dear lady sister! have thou no fear—none will ever liken you to Venus, for whatever cause, I trow!" replied Anne, with a sarcasm that, light as it was, evidently transfixed the very core of George Boleyn's bitter and envious wife. She writhed a smile, and was silent.

"'Tis no marvel you still cherish King Francis's recollection with a constancy! Is it not in the same rondel he declared Venus had a little finger like yours, with its pretty acorn double-nail?" murmured some soft, blandishing tones—and a very fair-complexioned girl, of about seventeen, bent scrutinizingly over Anne's hand, directing attention to a very slight deformity in its otherwise perfect shaping.

"Never look for it, Jane Seymour! those who love me, cannot see it!" said Anne, turning with undisguised scorn from the companion who was destined to succeed her in the royal couch she was herself to leave yet

purpler with her bright blood. "And now, sirs, I would only that the cardinal were come to espy how all true chivalry has taken a lady's part against his unhandsome gibe! But who should expect other than a snap at the heels from a butcher's cur?"

"Peace, peace! you talk Ipswich treason, sister! and this is the learned scholar, his grace's visitor in the abbey—wherein he shows like a flower on a dunghill!" said Boleyn.

Anne eyed the stranger thus introduced to her notice, with peculiar and marked attention. "You are very welcome, sir, and if your new rules had not denied women's access—in the daylight—within these precincts, I had ere now savoured of your doctrine, which I am told descends like a sweet dew on men's parched and aching spirits!" she said, with the winning grace and smile that made her commendation precious as a king's reward. "But I will not now thrust mine acquaintance upon you, if you deem it might harm you with your patron—who, for my sake, I freely confess, evil entreats some of the worthiest and noblest in the realm!"

"By St. Botolph of Bigod! that doth he—me among the rest — insomuch that I am forced to make myself a sanctuary man, and

only dare to leave it on a feast-day !" in rude and angry tones, vociferated one who now thrust himself into the group—whose wine-flushed visage, disordered and worn apparel, seemed scarcely to entitle him to enter it. Yet it was the Lord Bigod! "Mistress Boleyn," he continued, in his raised and defying tones, "if your marigold be a badge of rebellion against this false king-cardinal, give it me to wear, for I am in the mood for any desperation! But cocker not on with this preaching fellow, who is one of the prating rogues that trouble men's minds so much of late, that all noble arts and exercises are neglected, and grey-goose quills are in kings' hands instead of knightly lance and sword!"

"Peace, peace, thou frantic bear-bully!—learning had no part in driving thee mad, that now thou runnest thy head against the wall!" interposed Boleyn; "look to it! — thy brother's sanctuary has been broken ere now, and I know not thou art so well in his good graces to make him hazard more in thy behalf than he did for his friend and tutor, the treasurer!"

"St. Botolph! let him give me the old murderer's office, and I will put on monk's petticoats too!" returned the desperate courtier.

"In truth, Lord Bigod, we do oftener see a wealthy steward than a rich housebreaker," said Anne, with disdain in her whole manner. "But none of your name shall wear my favour —and I desire no consortage with it—wherefore, I pray you, leave me now!"

"Who is here among these glistening swashbucklers of yours, Mistress Anne, will drive me hence?" returned Bigod, putting his hand to where his sword should have been, with a fierce and bullying glare around —but suddenly discerning it was gone! "God's death!" he muttered hoarsely, "I forget, I kept wassail last night, and pledged it to the ravenous Jews!—but let the best of you seek me where I may borrow one awhile, in the Sanctuary, and I will send him thence, by the shortest way, to hell!"

"I will seek you there, Lord Bigod!—the quarrel is mine," said Roodspere, mildly: "where may I find you?"

"Thou!—Lutheran knave, I shall be well content to see thee there, for thy scarlet father's—or mother's sake—thou art, doubtless, my Lady Babylon's grandson, at least! Seek me at St. Julian of the Pilgrims, where my brother sties me at his abbey's expense—and bring a good quarter-staff with thee, and

let us see which of us can play best at rattle-pates!"

"Meanwhile—but that thou art unarmed, Bigod—I would give thee a fitter answer! What dost thou with so rude a tongue, man, without a weapon to do men right on thee?" said George Boleyn, very warmly; and the discussion might have passed into a more violent phase but that Anne dextrously interposed.

"Nay, if your brother wrongfully maltreats you, we are one at least in that, and you shall wear my marigold, Lord Bigod!" she said, giving him one from her own bouquet. "And now let us to wiser matters!—Are you not of Cambridge, master doctor—where there is so rath a crop of the New Learning, as we hear, that 'tis like to reverse the sluggard's parable, and choke the tares with the wheat?"

She put the question with a singular emphasis, with an earnest meaning in her eyes, akin to the mystic intelligence of the ancient adepts when they encountered. Almost involuntarily, Roodspere answered in the affirmative, with a like mysterious significance.

"In faith, what men 'clepen the Old Learning has long since been worn to tatters!" said Anne, with vivacity. "But what manner

of fine new garment is this they say you are spinning the church there? Is it like Joseph's coat, of many colours?"

"Nay, madam, but as I trust one as white and unmixed as the snowy garment wherein Elias appeared to our Lord on the Mount!" replied Roodspere.

Anne Boleyn's next question seemed to bear little relation to the former ones. "Are you in priest's orders, master doctor? Can you make twain one, in your arithmetic? I mean, can you marry folk who need so ill a turn?"

"To unmarry them, sister, were a feat of conjuring better worth the fee!" said George Boleyn, carelessly.

"Teach me that spell, good scholar, and I will hold you for a wiser magus than he who wrote the Grimmorie Book!" said Sir Thomas Wyatt, with smiling earnestness.

"I am a priest, lady!—I was made so ere I—I have been a priest almost from my boyhood!" said Roodspere, somewhat confusedly, and at the same moment Anne Boleyn observed with surprise that he grew extremely pale. Following the direction of his eyes—somewhat anticipating to behold the cardinal arrive—she was perplexed to discern that only

a body of nuns entered the church, among whom was a white-robed novice, closely veiled. Roodspere made an instantaneous movement towards this group; but at the same moment the queen, attended by Prior Sancgraal, returned into the transept, and her guardsmen, who had now taken up a station for the purpose, suddenly united their partisans to keep the way clear for her advance. Roodspere was therefore retained in his place, with what intense feelings of anxiety and wonder may be imagined when he recognized in the nuns those of Clerkenwell, whom he had ordered not to attend the festival, and in the novice, Lily-Virgin, who had fervently plighted her word she would not leave Clerkenwell till he brought her tidings of the decision of their fate!

CHAPTER XXI.

THE COURT OF HENRY VIII.

And after them Dissemblance and Suspect
Marched in one rank, yet not an equal paire;
For she was gentle, and of mild aspect,
Courteous to all, and seeming debonaire,
Goodly adorned, and exceeding faire.

SPENSER.

ALL save Roodspere remarked, as the queen approached the choir to take her seat, the visible traces of tears on her cheeks, and the signs of violent agitation in her countenance. A fiery glow now animated her former monumental paleness, and something of a leonine sparkle relumined the eyes of that daughter of the stately Kings of Castile, on ascertaining the extent of the degradation and perfidy menacing her own and her child's honour and greatness. Roodspere's attention was altogether absorbed in the distant group of nuns, and he did not even hear Anne Boleyn, closely at his elbow, whisper to Jane Seymour, "What ails her high majesty to-day, that she stares around her like a har-

nessed knight, that expects some grisly giant to the encounter?" And yet the destiny of both these women was decided also in that great though brief chasm of time!

"The queen's majesty doth in all things as best pleases her! And it is not for servants' eyes to scan her doings!" replied the submissive daughter of Sir John Seymour.

Roodspere's gaze was still riveted on the nuns of Clerkenwell. He saw that they were all arrayed in festive robes, and carried enormous nosegays, with lighted tapers stuck in the middle, as offerings to St. Edward. Dame Juliana headed them in her most sumptuous array, and evidently in answerable good humour, all smiles and courtesies, and delighted to find herself in such a scene of magnificence and variety. On a sudden Sancgraal's figure crossed the line of vision, and Roodspere, with straining eyes, beheld him most evidently accost the novice—saw that she returned his salute—though with visible shrinking, that some further whispered words were exchanged between them, and that finally she suffered him to take her hand, and lead her from the midst of her companions. Whither?—Roodspere had almost determined to break through the partisans of the guard to ascertain, when

he perceived that Sancgraal was leading her towards the group around the queen, behind whose thronged precinct he stood. In a few more instants, Lily-Virgin was kneeling, in as dejected and broken an attitude as her own flower, snapped by too rude a wind, at the foot of Katharine's throne, with Sancgraal by her side.

"This is the innocent betrothed of our most holy Lord, whose protection and support in the fulfilment of her plighted vow, I did beseech of your royal majesty!" said Sancgraal, in tones which, though low, were audible to a great distance.

"We grant it; and in assurance thereof, lord prior, bid her instantly retire with our master of the household—an ancient and most honourable gentleman—to the palace. There, at least, you shall be safe from all ensnaring devices, or ruffian violence, poor child! And we will care that you are allowed the full freedom of your judgment, so long and nobly hitherto maintained! God wot, ourself—though a queen, and the daughter of kings—do truly witness you have chosen the wisest and happiest, as well as holiest, lot, in the espousals of the cloister! Our Lady keep you well in your virginal and blessed preference! Master Grif-

fith, make this gentle damsel welcome in the apartments of the maids of honour, and let us find her safely and pleasantly lodged on our return to the palace!" These were the words the amazed Raphael Roodspere heard the queen pronounce! And in vain his gaze sought Lily-Virgin's, to endeavour to extort some explanation of this prodigious mystery. She continued enveloped in her veil; and when she spoke, her few faltering, dizzy-brained words conveyed little enlightenment. "I pray you, most royal lady!—I came hither to speak with my lord cardinal!—My life, my very life—my bedazed senses—depend on his answer. He summoned me—I am here! I would speak with my lord cardinal!"

"It were to your destruction, so! You are brought hither to be placed in the hands of a—of recreants to all honour, duty, faith, religion, and loyalty!" said Katharine, with passionate vehemence; "you have been betrayed by the emissaries of a wretch who knows of no goodness or pity, human or divine!—Give not yourself into his sacrilegious hands—from which I offer you this only escape and refuge—for even *he*, methinks, will not dare to seek the victims of his lust, in my chambers! Alas, trusting innocent! you know not how

Judasly, by a false-showing priest, you have been betrayed! But well, indeed, may our Lady's glorious eyes constantly distil tears over her altar within, and St. Edward burst the cerements of his tomb, and affright the eyes and ears of holy men with prodigies!'

"O, blessed mother! and did *he* betray me, too?" moaned Lily-Virgin in faint, bewildered accents—and before any support could be interposed, she sank, apparently lifeless, at the queen's feet.

"Let some remove her—let certain of her sisterhood aid you, Griffith!" said the queen, in compassionate accents; and, at a signal from Sancgraal, Barbara and another of the elder nuns, came forward to assist the grey-bearded master of the household in his task. But Roodspere had now in some measure rallied from his stultification of surprise. "Gracious madame!" he exclaimed, "there is some grievous delusion in this! The Cardinal's grace never sent for this lady hither! I am his visitor, and sole agent in this matter—and I know he never desired her presence in Westminster, or purposes in any manner to constrain her free will—which no longer inclines her to the dismal cloister life!"

"This is the Cambridge doctor, of whom

I spoke to your majesty erewhile!" said Sancgraal, with bitter significance.

"We must have some better assurance of your lord's goodwill than that of a malefact agent's in his evil one!" returned the queen, with great emotion, and eyeing Roodspere with majestic disdain. "But be it as it may, no noble English maiden can be held other than safest in the guardianship of her queen! and, therefore, I say, Griffith, remove her hence! If you have any plaint to make, sir priest, let your lord urge it to the king, and we shall not be too far to seek for an answer —and, lo ye, yonder he comes!"

A glance through the open north gate showed Roodspere that such was the case. A glittering procession was visible, approaching the abbey; in the midst of which, on a large white mule, gorgeously caparisoned in crimson and gold, rode the cardinal, in the richest robes of his dignity. At the same moment, Lily-Virgin was raised by the nuns, with the assistance of Sancgraal, and borne tottering in the direction of the monks' private entrance from the cloisters, which was the only feasible exit in the crowded condition of the transept. Roodspere felt that resistance was in vain; and, perplexed with

the circumstance of Lily-Virgin's secret summons to Wolsey's presence, he almost rejoiced in the personal safety thus secured for her. It was not possible for him to make a way to follow her, or even to meet the cardinal, through the dense mass he was wedged in—and thus he was obliged to await events where he was stationed.

"Your grace promises me all forbearance and secrecy, until events confirm what may else prove a revelation, not from St. Edward, but some devil in his form, who would complete our ruin!" murmured the prior, in humble but emphatic accents to the queen. "On my part, you may witness how lowly I will entreat the tyrant, if so be he may yet show us some Christian respects!" So saying, he hastened to present himself in Solomon's Porch, to receive the unwelcome visitant. By the time he reached the entrance, Wolsey's accustomed harbingers—two tall priests, bearing as many massive pillars of silver—crossed the threshold. Two more, bearing his archiepiscopal staff, and a huge golden crucifix, followed—then his chosen guard of twelve gigantic yeomen, with gilded axes; and finally himself, attended by Gardiner on foot, reached the portal. Several young nobles of his retinue

rushed forward, with emulous zeal, to assist him to alight, and the Lord Percy achieved the honour of holding his stirrup while he made the necessary effort.

A few faint murmurs, and his own pomp, alone announced the approach of the cardinal. Wolsey was now in a high degree unpopular, but he was dreaded almost equally, and the awe of his clerical dignity fell heavily on the ecclesiastical mob of Westminster. The populace made way, with few signs beyond mutterings, of their ill will, before the staves of his harbingers, and their shouts of "Room for my lord's grace! make way for my lord cardinal!" But still he heard enough to disquiet him, and he observed with asperity to Gardiner, as he alighted, "For all that, Flemish herrings shall be a dear meat to them next Lent!" and he made his way into the church with obviously no increase of whatever degree of complaisance and good humour he brought with him. "Let us see your prior, and espy if his proud stomach is brought to so humble an ebb as ye would have us think!—we shall try his new submission a far stretch!" he observed.

At this moment Sancgraal and his monks moved their serried mass, and sunk on their

knees in homage before the legate, while the former, in the most lowly accents, requested his fatherly benediction. It was the first time, although they had been so long in contest, that Wolsey and his monastic rebel had encountered in any direct personalty. And now the cardinal, surveying the prior with a look in which hatred was mingled with an expression amounting to loathing, and the most utter contempt, ostentatiously applied an orange, squeezed hollow and stuffed with aromatics, which he usually carried as a preventative against contagion from the prisoners brought before his tribunals, to his nose, as if some evil odour assailed it. "Fair and softly, prior!—we must first learn from your visitor whether any Christian prelate can give his benison to ye without profanation of a solemn Christian rite! Where is he?" he replied.

"Let your good pleasure be done in all things, my lord! Master Roodspere is yonder! —Is it still your gracious will to chaunt the mass to-day?" replied Sancgraal.

"Ay; but let me not lack proper assistance and attendance! This wonderful choir-master's of yours, above all!" said Wolsey, with a withering glance, and he strode on with a step that threw his scarlet robes widely

apart. Cromwel immediately joined his lord in his advance, but Gardiner lingered behind. "God help you, good brother, none other can!" he whispered hurriedly to Sancgraal, "I have only prevailed to have the visitation private! When I revealed to his grace the designed corruption of his ward, it seemed only to give him the utmost satisfaction! and not dreaming it should do so, I told the story in a way as that afterwards I could not urge the abominable heresy of the marriage he projects! But there are addled eggs in the warmest nests! and though he will doubtless deny all, you may find some means to let this be known! But I do not recommend in any wise the production of your Italian in evidence! *Verbum sap!*—I doubt me my fellow hath some project to lay hold of him, and by torture or bribery to win him to some ill-witnessing against ye all! St. Edward give you Sampson's strength, I may no longer tarry!"

Sancgraal turned pale—pale as death's pale horse! "The roof of St. Edward protects all who claim its privileges!" he muttered, in reply.

"Not from the legate's bull! *that* breaks every hedge! and I brought its confirmation from Rome, brother!" said Gardiner, com-

passionately; but hastening on, after a brief pause of reflection.

"Why then, the sanctuary men are ready—and come the worst, *she* is mine!" said Sancgraal, clenching his teeth; and he proceeded to give some mechanical directions to the persons engaged in preparation for the ceremonials of high mass.

Meanwhile Wolsey continued his advance, with the evident intention of paying his respects to the queen. Katharine awaited his approach in majestic calm, but with a look whose upbraiding scrutiny at once alarmed and puzzled him. Still no feeling against the man could overcome her reverence for the office, for certainly otherwise the queen was not sufficiently a mistress of dissimulation to condescend so far as she did to her discovered mortal enemy, when he bent in homage before her. She bade him arise, in quiet and almost gracious accents; and when he requested her highness's forbearance for a few instants, while he performed his devotion to St. Edward, she permitted but little asperity to mingle in her reply. "Join in our prayers, then, for a good restoration of peace between our lord and Cæsar, cardinal, and

that those only who have sowed the tares in our wheat, may reap the harvest of ill!"

"The winds bear evil seeds, madame; no man knows whence nor how! But I hope for a good end to all things! The unprincely carriage of the emperor is chiefly to blame in this—and his letting loose his Lutheran wolves against the very person of the spiritual father of Christendom!" replied Wolsey, demurely. "Yet I could be well content your grace made not these high matters of policy so much the subjects of your open discourse that the very maidens of your retinue hold themselves qualified to give their sarsenet judgment in them!"

Wolsey's eye fell as he spoke on Anne Boleyn—and not by accident—and it was encountered with a flash of disdain and defiance that amazed while it exasperated him.

"Are we the daughter of the politic Ferdinand, and do we need counsel like this?—But we own your grace has reason to deem us somewhat easily misled!" replied Katharine, with austere composure.

"May I not at least reasonably misdoubt, your highness's ken is so far abroad, that you see not very behoveful matters nearer hand?" said Wolsey, with sudden vivacity. "How is

this—hath it rained marigolds? And do these galliard gentlemen pay their court to your grace by wearing the device of the poor flatterer of the sun, that withers when his flaming eye is once withdrawn?"

"We wear the marigold, my lord cardinal, in honour of Mistress Anne Boleyn, and in defiance of all gainsayers!" shouted the fierce and insolent tones of Lord Bigod.

"Misfortune makes us acquainted with strange bedfellows, then, in very sooth, my sometime Lord of Chepstow, since Mistress Anne has chosen you for her champion!" replied Wolsey, with a malignant smile. "Well, well—your flowers are good enow for the wearers, but something of their summer pride is over!—How say you, Mistress Anne! the sun shines not so brightly now as once upon a time?"

"There is an envious cloud, now as ever, between us and his cheerful beams!—but they will pierce through it and dispel the black vapour at last!" replied the beautiful maid of honour, biting her lip with disdain and vexation as she turned away.

"It shall be well!—but we have thornier debates in the Abbey here to-day! Where is our visitor?" said Wolsey, encountering Rood-

spere's fixed and most anxious gaze with a smile. "Make way for Master Roodspere there—and let him follow me to the shrine!"

Struck with wonder and misgiving at the extreme benignancy of Wolsey's manner, Roodspere nevertheless complied with all diligence. No opposition was now offered to his advance—and in a few moments he found himself alone with the cardinal in the Chapel of the Kings.

Roodspere had never yet entered this sanctum sanctorum, unwilling either to refuse or yield the accustomed homage. Its interior glories fully equalled any expectation. It chanced that a sudden effulgence of the sun inundated the chapel as they entered, and the least imaginative beholder might have been startled with the notion that he had intruded into the sleeping chamber of a host of kings and sovereign ladies lulled in a magic slumber, and awaiting but the word of power to start into life and empire again! Such, the crowned and sceptred statues, reposing under fretted canopies, rich with every device of the gothic chisel, on couches of onyx, jasper, porphyry, and other precious stone, glowing with ore and emblazoned heraldry—might well have seemed. The flow of sunshine almost extinguished the

innumerable tapers set on the three stages forming the perpetual catafalque of St. Edward, but only fired into more splendid life the countless gems and inlaid work of the shrine and flooring, which Abbot Ware had also covered with a mosaic that once rivalled those of the Alhambra in brilliancy. But Roodspere, absorbed in agitating thoughts, noticed little of this; and Wolsey, well accustomed to similar displays, knelt and pattered over the customary devotion to St. Edward, with scarcely a glance around. It was a species of litany, imploring the saint's favour in the name of his numerous virtues and miracles, recited from an engraved tablet on the shrine. "Thou knowest, my lord St. Edward!" concluded the cardinal, still aloud, "that I am not at all to blame in what I am doing against your monks of Westminster, who, by wickedness and abominations not to be named to your chastity, bring upon us all the anger and contempt of the people. My holy lord, do but grant me your aid in overcoming mine enemies, both here and abroad, that I may attain the chair of St. Peter, and I will fill it in such a manner that it shall be for the great good and redemption of the church, and the utter extirpation of all heresies, for ever and ever. Amen!"

"Why say ye not Amen to mine, Master Roodspere? Pray I not well for the continuance of this merry world of ours?" said Wolsey, rising and addressing Roodspere with a degree of familiar playfulness he had never yet displayed in his intercourse with him. "And why kneel you not in your devotion also? Beware how you give our enemies the monks any handle against us, for I am determined now to bring upon them, and their abhorred chief, all the extremities they have so long provoked! Yea, the very means they have taken to turn my wrath elsewhere, brings it, contrariwise, upon their own heads! And, son, that you may perceive you have no reason to forbear the launching of the leven I will put into your hands, know that Sancgraal and his spies are they who have informed me of your love-junketings in Clerkenwell, your dalliance with the rosy-hued Lily there! Can I prove better, fair son, how mistaken was your indignation erewhile against me, than by wishing you a long enjoyment of those sweet firstfruits of love?—which verily do flavour more deliciously on the palate of youth, than the annats of a wealthy bishopric at a wiser season!"

There was that in the jocund tone of this address—in Wolsey's licentious smile and in-

sinuation—that warmed Roodspere's blood with a glow of indignation and disgust, all the necessity of his position scarcely enabled him to suppress. "Heaven forbid!" he then replied. "Heaven forbid, your grace should have cause to reproach me with violating the confidence you have placed in me, by imagining aught against the purity I am ready to defend with my heart's last drops! Believe not so basely of one whom you have deigned to style your son, my lord! But yet your grace's declaration may something embolden me to implore your fatherly protection for us both, and consent to unite two hearts, which already beat but as one, in a perpetual bond of fidelity and love!"

"You have it, son! See now whether I was worthy of those upbraiding eyes that, in York Place, reminded me of Hopkins's prophecy!" replied the cardinal, smilingly. "Tut, tut, my lad!—I knew when I gave you the office that it was a dangerous one. Steers whose tether we would keep, should not be set to graze with the heiferage!—I will do what I can to pleasure both of ye, for I see well you have talents to prove of infinite service to me, besides the natural love I bear my pretty Alice's as shapely son! The Paulet's daughter

shall be installed prioress in her nunnery—you abbot, here! A happier Abelard and Helowis, I trow!"

"God in heaven forbid!" exclaimed Roodspere, with an unspeakable emotion, yet restraining its ebullition. "I purposed only, which now I do, kneeling at your feet, that deign to own yourself, my sire!—to implore your release for us both from our thrall!—me, from vows which my ignorant childhood undertook, and my manhood finds too heavy to be borne!—her, from the credulous imagination but, of one irrevocable! It is in your power, my father! You are endowed with all the pope's claimed powers here in England; and I implore of you leave to take, as my wedded wife, this deserted orphan lady, who loves me as I love her, with all our souls; and who desires and consents, on that condition, to be mine!"

Wolsey stared in utter and incredulous amazement at the suppliant who addressed to him so surprising a petition. "As your *wife*—your *wedded wife*! Man alive, what madness rave you now? Are you not a priest, bound by vows which the church hath never yet released, but with infinite reluctance—to save great realms and estates from destruction? Know you not that those vows are the very

foundation of her power—alone give her the absolute dominion she requires over her allegiance? And what can the frenziest lover desire more than his love's full holding and possession? And is she not yours, secluded from all the world else, where sallow jealousy himself could not place his leman more to his mind? What impossible thing is this, then, thou wantest more? Is it not enow that I have cheerfully resigned this simpleton—who, I own, had yet strangely won upon me—to content your pleasure; but you would also I should deal the heaviest blow that can be, to the empire myself would sway in?—confirm all my worst enemies, the monks, allege against me, and allow thee to example my clergy with the deadliest heresy of Martin! For wherein differs it, save in degree, that a priest marries with a novice instead of a friar with a nun? Plainly I tell thee, Raphael!—fall how it may between thee and the novice in thy charge, rather than loosen the bonds that keep thee mine and the church's, I would rivet them by as many folds of adamant again, if any could be added! Foolish boy! what dost thou ask me to do against thyself? To make thee the abhorrence of all thy fellows—our shame and opprobrium with the people!—

to disinherit thee of all the glorious projects I have formed in thy behalf, whom I will bear on the crest of my mighty wave to the highest stars of power and fortune! For nothing can now prevent my attainment of St. Peter's chair! And this abbacy of Westminster, which I mean to confer upon thee as soon as it is vacant, is but an earnest of my purposed favour!"

"My lord, I desire not—I cannot—I will not accept any step in the guilty elevation you offer me! I believe not all the doctrines—I detest the practice—of our church!" returned Roodspere, vehemently. "I desire only to live and die, poor and lowly if it must be, but stainless and happy in the lawful love of my betrothed wife! I know too well that only your word can loosen the strong trammels of superstition that bind her seraph spirit's liberty, and give it leave to soar into the heaven of innocent love! And therefore only do I knee your power in supplication thus, for I have consulted the oracles of Scripture and of the human heart, and I know that your dominion herein is a false usurpation, and the laws ye deem to bind it only accursed illegalities of its tyranny! I am no seducer, Cardinal! Your unnatural and unholy regu-

lations are, indeed, devised as if to make men such; but I have withstood their snares! Never, save with the one hallowed kiss that sealed our plighted troth—and which, I swear it, was pure as the light that touches the flower, her prototype, and but whitens it the more—have I approached her loveliness! What needed I to kneel to you thus to sanctify our passion by marriage, if I were the seducer methinks you call me? Secrecy and solitude, fitter for so villanous a purpose, were already mine! I am to blame only in this, that I dreamed once there was some magic, some spell, in a juggling sound of words, to struggle with and vanquish humanity and nature!"

"Marry, I am glad thou teachest me that I have yet a means to stay thee in thy gallop down the precipice!" said Wolsey, now much agitated. "If thou wilt not bite the cherries bobbing to thy lips, trust me, I shall not cut them from the stalks! I command thee henceforth to cease speaking — nay, to cease thinking—such treason against the church as now thou utterest! and Mistress Paulet shall know she listens to such pleadings under the deadliest penalties of heretic misbelief! The church demands a blind and implicit obedience in all its children—and to

thee, I AM THE CHURCH! and this I command under her malediction and mine!"

"I shall not dread either as heaven's, or a father's curse! When have you been such to me, cardinal; or your church to men?" replied Roodspere, rising precipitately from his attitude of entreaty. "But this breaks the last slender link that ever united the son of the betrayed and abandoned Alice Roodspere to either—and I thank your grace, from my inmost soul, for such a full release!"

"Gardiner is right—and this man will yet prove my destruction! ay, and of the church herself! Sancta Maria! whither have I wandered, that a priest dares ask myself leave to wed! Gardiner is right — we must retrace our steps! and, to begin, I do strictly enjoin and command you not to preach to-day; I will not make mine own ears witnesses against you!" said Wolsey, in extreme trepidation; "Meanwhile—since you will have it so—your novice shall be restored to the keeping of her confessor of old, who, I trow me well, is not like to prove so scrupulous!"

"I dare confide in my Lily's love and fidelity, Lord Cardinal! and your own evil summons, and perchance designs, have delivered her into the protection of a royal

matron, who will care that yours at least continue to be foiled!" returned Roodspere, who was now exasperated out of all respect.

"How so? has the queen meddled in this matter too?" replied Wolsey, hastily. "Why then it is a trick of the prior's—and Sir Reynard, the monk, has carried off the prize as wontedly!—I sent not for your leman, thou wise young clerk, nor dreamed of any such renewal of your unjust suspicions! but be assured that, in the queen's custody, she is in a narrower captivity than any Sancgraal could himself devise!"

Roodspere was seized with the most vehement alarm on this revelation, the probability of which all he had seen confirmed. Under the influence of this emotion, he entirely changed and moderated his tone—entreating the cardinal to explain to the queen how unfounded her suspicions were, and obtain Lily's restoration to her convent.

"And dost thou think I will make myself a suitor, in this behalf, to the peevish Spaniard, who suspects all I do, and would be but too glad of an occasion of reviling and refusal towards me?" he replied. "And wherefore?—to gain peril and confusion to myself! Thou mayst aid me, if thou wilt, to revenge this of thine, and all

the other indignities she has put upon me—I have not concealed from thee how! But what is this?—have the monks gone mad in their rebellion? have they not commenced the mass without my leading? is not yonder their boasted choirmaster, chaunting the Introite? By the chaste St. Edward! we will let him and them know on what penalties they proceed!" and he strode, with a haughty and indignant step, out of the chapel.

CHAPTER XXII.

Ego et Rex meus!
I and my King.
WOLSEY'S EPISTOLARY STYLE.

WE must explain the cause of the seeming departure of the monks from their politic course of submission, which had hitherto foiled their enemies more effectually than any resistance —as a blow is powerless against one who sinks before it! The cardinal, on his advance to the shrine, left his train behind him—among whom was the Lord Percy. This young nobleman speedily managed to make his way to a secluded pillar, out of the immediate circle of the queen, whither Anne Boleyn, as if in indignation, withdrew from her wrangle with the cardinal. But the noble lover's passionate greeting was suddenly and decisively checked. "So, my Lord Percy! you have come hither without my marigolds, which I bade you wear at every hazard!" she exclaimed, her brilliant eyes flashing with countless angry diamonds as she spoke.

"Dearest! why would you run the hazard of the cardinal's discovery, and hurl us both down the precipice of his wrath, at whose base lie dashed to pieces so many noble wrecks!" replied the timorous lover.

Anne Boleyn loved with the vehemence of a first passion in the heart of a woman of poetical spirit, of rash and energetic impulse. But she was irritated in the highest degree by what she deemed a pusillanimous shrinking on her lover's part; and she replied with passionate vehemence, "I will rid you of all danger on my score henceforth, Lord Percy! True lovers fear none and find none—but thou!—Here is my half of your broken ring again—believe me we shall never piece the fragments! Give me my portrait back also, and go and wed with tall and pallid Mary Talbot! Contracts should be kept, and the cardinal made that for you!"

"I will never yield this portrait which I wear on my breast, but deeper in my heart, while I have life to keep it!" replied Percy, drawing a miniature by Holbein forth, and covering it with kisses.

"I will send a challenger for it then, with whom you dare make no controversy!" returned Anne, haughtily bridling her beautiful neck.

"Were it the king himself!" replied Percy, when she interrupted him—

"Ay, so it shall be! The king, the king himself! Since you will have it so!—since all I have told of his now openly avouched passion and importunities, stirs you in no wise to my deliverance! And now, too, that your cardinal plainly conspires with his master, since either I must obey his orders, and to France, with my father on his embassy—or win the king—at what price thou knowest, to command my stay!"

"What can I do! What can be done, my soul's soul?" exclaimed Percy, despairingly. "He whom I thought should be most our friend, utterly denies his aid, and—"

"Ay, ay, the lying monk, who calls me heretic because—because I believe not St. Rosalba crossed the sea in a sieve!" said Anne, who was yet well aware of her lover's superstitious bigotry. "Well, let him wed you to Shrewsbury's daughter—I will dance the merriest at the bridalty!"

"Never, never, dearest, shall that bridal day dawn!—But, meanwhile, what can I do? I love, I adore, I would give my heart's best blood to clasp thee mine! But how may it be, when heaven itself seems of the complot against

us?" returned Percy, with a depth of emotion that obviously moved his angry mistress.

"Do what I bid you only!" she replied, her manner resuming its characteristic gaiety and sprightliness. "And to begin, we will break the ice with the cardinal, by thy wearing of my marigolds in his sight all the feast! Why, when I was in France, I have seen a brave gentleman snatch a glove from a lion's mouth at his lady's bidding! 'Tis not so dangerous to wear a flower! and because thou hast no marigolds of thine own, I will give thee these of mine, warm from mine own heart!"

It was not in any lover's prudence to resist such an offer; and when Anne, with her own dexterous hand, had playfully adjusted the flowers in the young lord's breast, he snatched it in both his own to his lips, and covered it with kisses. It was at this moment that a most unexpected apparition entirely changed the current of every beholder's thoughts. King Henry VIII. himself entered upon the scene!—and in a manner that excited universal wonder and curiosity.

For some minutes a lively and insulting point of war, resembling a Scottish pibroch, played by a numerous band of musicians crossing the space before the church, had been

audible on the exterior. A group followed that excited the most lively curiosity, consisting of personages easily recognised as the principal ones of the court, accompanying the king himself—notwithstanding a curious disguise they had assumed. But this species of public masquerade was so much in the manners of the time, and Henry's peculiar taste, that it was not regarded as anything extraordinary by his subjects, to recognise their imperious sovereign in a quaint costume intended to clothe him with the attributes of the radiant autocrat of the skies, the sun, while his courtiers were attired in garbs meant to represent those of the shepherds who received Phœbus Apollo in his exile from Olympus. Classical shepherds, in robes of velvet, satin, and cloth of gold, were rather an anomalous group; but who could fail to recognise their status by their flowery crooks, and garlanded locks? What was the king's assumption, could scarcely be doubted by those familiar with heraldic suns—a common device in tournaments and similar displays. An ornament of polished gold, set with the most brilliant gems, and cut into rays, surrounded his head and visage with no slight resemblance to the great luminary. His hair and beard were

powdered profusely with gold dust to increase the illusion. All the rest of his garments were of cloth-of-gold, or of yellow velvet, so thickly ornamented with emeralds and rubies, on the breast and in the hooped sleeves, that little of the foundation stuff was there visible. These gems were shaped into a heart, on the king's breast, and were easily interpreted, in the fantastic allegorical style of the day, into the expression of a lover's hope. A long mantle of brocade, stiff with its own richness, trimmed and lined with gilded sables, descended to his jewelled spurs behind, and, open in front, revealed the massive limbs of the sovereign, cased in hose of different colours. A broad belt, beautifully wrought in goldsmith's work, in which were two jewelled daggers of unequal length; a profusion of rings, and the insignia of many orders of chivalry, among which his own Garter was conspicuous, completed a toilette not altogether unworthy of the illustrious imitated.

The showy manners of this prince, his despotic and irascible temper, his love of personal display, combined to render him almost equally the dread and admiration of his subjects. He himself was particularly vain of his person; and, at a distance, his towering sta-

ture, his majestic and haughty bearing, realised the very ideal of a king! His large, handsome face, with its glowing, ruddy complexion, set off by a short, golden-hued beard, in some fair degree justified the eulogiums of his personal beauty in which his courtiers, male and female, found a peculiarly acceptable vein of adulation. But on a nearer view, his features grew too strong and coarse; his golden beard had a tint in it that suggested the hues of the fluid in which his memory is so deeply dyed; and there was a stern, morose expression on his lips—a craft and cruelty in the character of his too-small eyes, that contradicted the first favourable effect of the bluff and fresh-complexioned visage. His person also lost much of its majesty on approach, and it was thereby disclosed that though still in the prime of manhood, Henry's figure was becoming too bulky for grace—tending fast to corpulence.

Such was the gorgeous personage who, striding into the porch of the abbey church, suddenly halted as if he had received a rebuffing blow, and exclaimed to one upon whose shoulder he leaned, like a giant upon a staff of nearly equal proportions:—

"Seest thou yonder, Suffolk? Is not

yonder Mistress Anne, hand-clasping with the great baby of Northumberland?"

"She is wontedly as visible as a standard royal among the pennons, sire! But methinks this cannot be Mistress Anne!" replied the Duke of Suffolk, also much disturbed.

"Ha, so! And thou wouldst have had me believe she wears marigolds—not merely to defy the cardinal's taunt, but to confess her homage to the sun!" returned Henry, grinding his teeth like a vexed lion. "*Corpus Domini*! I was in the right rather to believe in her own nayword, which she gave me to my beard as fixedly as an she had declared a gospel truth!"

"They all begin with these protestations, sire, and end with little Dukes of Richmond!" responded the licentious courtier, alluding to a former successful amour of the king's, with evidently good effect.

"Well, let us on, and see how she will take our now homage, and penitent renewals of offence!" he replied, with a grim smile, and continued his advance at the lusty pace congenial to his impatient and boisterous character.

"Sweet Lord! here is the king! Give me my marigolds again!" exclaimed Anne, who,

with the tender art of the nightingale, that flutters as far as possible from its nest, in the bird-catcher's sight, had hitherto exhibited no signs of preference for Percy before the king. "But, nay," she continued, hastily rejecting the flowers which Percy, also in great alarm, would have restored; "nay, let him also see I slight not so many noble wooers for his sake, as Suffolk would persuade!"

By this time the king and his retinue, announced by the confused murmurs of the populace, had arrived before the queen's chair of state. Contrary to her usual severe observance of etiquette, either in indignation, or to humour a style of fanciful display to which she was accustomed, Katharine did not rise, or make any signs of recognizing the personages before her. She gazed at the king, indeed, for an instant with a mixture of austerity and anxious sadness, and then coldly inquired what manner of men they were, and what was their business with herself?—A question usually put to elicit the purport of these mediæval charades; and to which the Duke of Suffolk replied, in swelling rhymes, that they were the shepherds of a certain king, among whom a glorious stranger had lately descended, as it appeared to them,

from heaven, from the beauty and grace of his person, and his wondrous wit and invention; who, desiring to see some of their country sports, they had brought him thither to challenge the abbey cock, St. Dominic, to a battle with their king's favourite bird, the doughty Charlemagne! To confirm this statement, the shepherd-duke pointed to a huge red cock, borne by certain of the company in a large wicker cage, which immediately set up a shrill note of defiance. There needed no more to summon the attention of Cellarer Gildas, who happened to be at hand.

"It is even so, sweetheart!" said Henry, with something of rough kindness in his tones. "Suffolk has told us how St. Dominic overcame the prize of cocks for a long time hereabout—one Dr. Martin! And now we come to beat him, in his turn, on his own dunghill! And as ladies' eyes and smiles are the only true judges and rewards of noble chivalry, we come with our own lips to invite yourself and this beauteous bevy to be witnesses of Charlemagne's success!"

Cockfighting was not yet considered a low or degrading amusement, and it was a favourite one with Henry VIII. congenial to the rhodo-

montade chivalry of his character. He built none of his palaces without a theatre expressly designed for such diversions. There was nothing, therefore, offensive, in the opinion of the times, or very extraordinary in this proposition: but Katharine, who had an extreme aversion to most of the violent and rude recreations of her adopted land, and was already secretly provoked to the highest, replied with asperity, "I came hither, sir, to do my devoir to St. Edward—not to see two wretched fowls tear and mangle each other! God wot, I have need of the saint's assistance! Therefore, I beseech your most high sunship, since it pleases you to guise your royal self in a fit fashion to repay the worship of the flaunting flowers of the world!—to let me bide in peace!"

"So be it, sweetheart!—if it likes you to wear your knees out to St. Edward—we must bear it as we may!" returned Henry, testily. "But we pray you, let such of your ladies as are bred to our English customs, and can relish chivalry and valour even in birds, to be of our lookers-on!" His glance ranged furtively as he spoke among the maids of honour, and brightened as it lighted on Anne Boleyn.

"I give them all fair leave—there are some ready enough, and who will be glad of any excuse to escape good doctrine!" said the queen, without looking round—but Anne Boleyn bit her lip till the blood nigh started.

"So, dames and damsels! we must content us with the light of the stars without their moon—unless ye make this amber-golden lady yours, for the nonce?" said Henry, with eyes that too plainly singled out Anne Boleyn for her to affect to ignore what was nevertheless a very unwelcome honour to her at this moment. She curtseyed deeply, almost to the ground, with a humility that yet did not deprive her manner of a certain degree of archness and mockery, as she replied, "Your grace shall pardon me if I crave not to be set in place of so imperial a planet, for I know not how to keep the state and gravity beseeming the queen of night! Yet it is not for a subject to dispute your grace's pleasure in aught!"

"A true obedience, could we trust in honied words, damsel!" said Henry, with a glowing but momentary glance that brought the richest hues of the blood to Anne's complexion.

"Who would not be proud to obey so royal a prince and master, *in all lawful obedience?*" she replied, after a slight pause. "But 'tis

well your majesty hath time to display your beams, and to liken our gracious lady to the gentler sharer of the skies, ere the cardinal comes from his long prayers within—for neither sun nor moon do shine in the heavens when a comet glares!"

"You love not the cardinal, Mistress Anne!—we are not now to learn," said Henry, slightly puckering his brows, and yet expecting Anne's reply with a smile.

"It were but a lost favour for a lady to love a priest!—or should be, sire, though indeed I have heard say that few women bodies, of so strange a taste, need fear to die of slighted love for my lord the legate!" said Anne, amidst a general laugh. "But certes, my liege, of that disease shall I never be coffined!—and he loves me as little—so there is nothing lost between us but now and then a sparkling word!"

"Ay, scorn for scorn—and love for love, Mistress Anne!—is a fair barter," replied Henry, with a piercing look. "Well, how say you? Will you be our Lady of Beauty in this noble tournay between Emperor Charlemagne and the abbey cock to-day, and guerdon his triumph with the only true reward of chivalry?"

"Faith and troth, my liege, an assemblage

of sleek partlets, speckled brown or black, were fitter than we to judge the achievements of these feathered knights! And, sir, princes oftener lose than win the stakes when they pit them with priests, of what coat soever!" replied Anne, archly, yet with subtle significance, enforced by burly Gildas's sudden exclamation, "By holy Peter, my liege! since St. Dominic beat Dr. Martin of the Gatehouse, I would match him against all of his kind, of whatsoever degree!"

"I accept the challenge, dan monk! Let us make a hunter's mass of it, and to work!" said Henry, eagerly.

"But first, my liege, I have a part to play in the mystery, which, without me, cannot but miscarry!" replied jovial Gildas. "Your grace wots well, the people must have their laugh in it, or they relish no tragedy and fine morality! and I am to be hell's Merry Andrew, Dan Belphegor!"

"I will bide your time, Friar Tuck! and see your miracle play. I have heard of your craft here in devising of the same!" replied Henry, smiling. "Meanwhile let no man be disturbed on my account! If I am the sun, I am the sun in the guise of a simple shepherd now, and

as such only I will take my place among my lady queen's attendance!"

He advanced as he spoke, fixing a frowning stare upon Lord Percy, who, aware of the meaning of the portent, after a brief internal struggle, yielded to a feeling of very unheroic alarm, and retired from his station beside Anne Boleyn. Henry occupied it immediately; extending his hand as he came to the lady, with the gesture of one who imperatively commanded rather than asked reconciliation for some offence. Anne curtseyed again very deeply, but did not take the proffered hand. "How, sweet one! You have not yet forgiven me my stolen feast of kisses which, by my fay, had nigher stifled me than thee!" he murmured, bending his visage amorously down to the bright Boleyn's, and speaking in a whisper strangely soft for his imperious voice.

"I do beseech your grace not to single me out before men's eyes thus! My lady the queen already holds something lightly of me, and—," murmured Anne, shrinking back, when Henry interrupted her—

"Ay, in truth, age as little improves women's temper as their persons! But, my mistress, I am not ashamed of my choice before any—and 'tis therefore I am come in the sun's

likeness to show how amply I return my marigold's loving homage! All observers assure me it is in sign of a return to my love that you have chosen this flower as your emblem!"

"Nay, sir, but to outmock the cardinal's mock!" returned Anne, with vivacity. "Your grace may espy how many noble gentlemen have taken up my quarrel therein!"

"Ay, indeed!" said Henry, with a grimly jealous glare around. "You are right, madam! and kings jostle not in crowds. But do even the cardinal's popinjays wear your badge? Is not yonder sallow boy, with the full bunch, of his household?"

"Myself, I gave that favour to my Lord Percy to wear!" replied Anne, piqued into a rash avowal by this disparagement of her beloved. "But the cardinal hath so numerous a household, it were hard to choose out of it—insomuch that I do oft marvel, sire, how one realm can bear the charges of two courts that yield to one another in no respect of state and glory!"

"Where is the cardinal now? Deems he that the majesty of England itself should lackey in his attendance!—We will have the mass muttered at once! The rather, that in the clatter-patter and incense, I shall have covert

with my golden doe!" returned Henry, in a tone of angry petulance. "Ho, good fathers, begin the mass! We have the day before us, but it will not last for ever!"

"Sire, the cardinal commanded us to await his return; he will himself sing the mass," said Sancgraal, who was standing near the throne, absorbed, as it seemed, in downcast meditation.

"God's life!—are there two kings in England, or, by St. George, but one, and we not he?—To it at once, on our command, or we will have some better reason than the cardinal's to hold you excused!"

The prior, secretly delighted with the order, did not for a moment hesitate obedience; and the mass, whose opening chaunt caught Wolsey's attention, commenced without his assistance or presence.

The two dukes of Norfolk and Suffolk had meanwhile joined one another, in a spot somewhat remote from the centre of action. This noble twain resembled and were united with each other in unbounded hatred and envy of the cardinal; in all other respects, they differed In person, Norfolk's low stature and dark complexion contrasted with the powerful person and florid hues of Suffolk, one of the

handsomest men of his time. Norfolk was a bigoted adherent of the old opinions; Suffolk was suspected of a leaning to the new. Norfolk could allege great services to justify ambition; Suffolk, only the personal favour of the sovereign. Wolsey had conferred only injuries on the one, and only favours on the other. By stirring the king's jealousy of all approach to his supremacy, he had prevailed to strip the conqueror of Flodden of most of his hard-earned power and distinctions. He had consigned his brother-in-law, the Duke of Buckingham, to the block, under charges of high treason—less doubtfully, because he found in him an audacious rival to his own engrossiug domination. Suffolk, he had loaded with favours; had procured him pardon for the enormous offence of a stolen marriage with Henry's favourite sister, and had gifted him with places of high honour and emolument about the king's person. That these injuries and benefits procured nearly the same result—perhaps only added the rancour of ingratitude to Suffolk's hatred—none could have doubted, who had overheard the muffled dialogue between the two great nobles.

"Heaven prosper this gear!—to begin the

mass without the cardinal!" murmured the Duke of Norfolk to him of Suffolk.

"Said I not truly—much dropping wears away a stone! I'll wager a tester this is your niece's doings, my lord—and that he hath taken the turn from some well-witted gibe of hers!" replied Suffolk.

"The wench hath a good discretion in some matters, Suffolk—not in all!" said Norfolk, gloomily. "I saw Sir Thomas More shake his head twice yesterday, when she fell to the praises of this new Lollard fellow the cardinal has placed in Westminster!"

"He shook it for some wise matter of musing in it, not for religion's sake!" returned the ducal compeer; "but now what is the king saying, that his eyes sparkle so?"

"Nay, what is he doing?—hath he not passed his arm round her girdle?" returned Norfolk, sharply.

"Yea, and drawn her scarlet-runner lips to his own! I trust that none do espy it but we!—They have made a reconciliation, doubtless! Nay, now she tosses from him—like the mane from the steed, to return in a thicker gloss!"

"Cousin of Suffolk, I pray you not to forget that, though it were my father's folly

to humour a foolish daughter, and make the mercer, Boleyn's, grandchildren his also—this lady is my niece!" exclaimed the Duke of Norfolk.

"I shall not forget, fair brother—it will be profitable for us all some day to remember it!—but of all ill-luck, here comes the cardinal!" returned Suffolk. "Oh, I do never see his red robes but they seem to me stained in Buckingham's most princely blood!—look at his broad fly-flap, too!—what lack we with such at all in England? Our sunshine is not so hot as it is in Rome, to need brims so broad!"

"Peace, Suffolk! the Holy See must have its stately ministers among us — but the greater the height the heavier the fall!"

By this time Anne Boleyn, partly in terror lest the king's importunities should be observed, and partly to obtain a release from them, had given the assurances of pardon he demanded—and the coarse-minded despot had sealed the grant in his own style. The arrival of Wolsey was, therefore, to her—unusual circumstance!—rather a relief on this occasion. "Pray you, sir, be now apayed! — yonder comes the king's king, the great cardinal!—and we must be all now like a sort of school-

boys that have stolen into the woods a-nutting, and see the master coming, rod in hand! If your grace keeps still, you will learn how to king it proudlier, from your servant, than ever from your own royal ancestry!"

But Cromwel foiled this kind of exposure, having been an attentive observer of all that could be publicly noted in the circumstances attending the king's arrival. He met Wolsey re-entering the choir, and pausing in astonishment to find that his presence was almost completely unnoticed, in the popular delight at the appearance of what seemed to be a flight of angels, in an admirably contrived machine, over the chapel of the shrine. Something resembling a blue firmament, crowded with the choirboys of the abbey, with wings on their bare shoulders, and tapers twinkling like stars, in their hands, descended from the roof, and with their well-tuned chorus, almost realised some such celestial attendance. The already irritated and perturbed prelate learned sufficient in the few brief words he exchanged with his secretary, to increase both emotions —and to enforce their complete dissimulation. Smoothening his visage all over into a smiling expression, as if with a rolling-iron, Wolsey immediately took his way, through the clouds

of incense that now enveloped the transept, to the royal group.

"It is *but* the cardinal, sweetheart!—what fear you when your knight and champion is at hand?" whispered Henry, tenderly.

"Let me see King Charlemagne vanquish St. Dominic—and I will fear no more!" replied Anne.

Meanwhile Wolsey continued his advance, with his admirably got-up expression of joy and welcome, but not a little surprised and alarmed in secret to perceive that the king eyed him without making any reciprocating gesture, even of recognition. The company he was in explained the circumstance somewhat, but not very satisfactorily—and, confident as he was, and had reason to be, in the ascendancy of his genius and of long habit over the king, even Wolsey felt shadows of misgiving as he approached the pair. "Let me mar no mirth if I make none, my most dear liege!" he said, as soon as he came within the royal hearing, with a peculiar smile at Mistress Boleyn, which she repaid with a glance of disdain. "But, having come hither to show that it is from no slackness of devotion to the royal saint, your highness's predecessor, but that being compelled, I visit their transgressions on his

monks—I learn, that he whom I do esteem mine earthly god, so speaking as mine heart will overflow, is present also, and hasten to yield mine adoration where it is most due—from the creature to the creator, humanly speaking!" and he threw himself on his knees, at the king's feet.

"You are a heathen worshipper, lord cardinal! you do adore the sun!" said Anne, with a tart smile.

"You are welcome, cardinal!—the rather as they say you do not pray so oft as to render your prayers wearisome in heaven!" replied Henry, his good-humour in a degree restored even by this grossness of flattery.

"They do wrong me that say so, sire! Never, for any weariness of business of th state, or pleasureable desport of mine own, do I omit a single collect of my devotion!" returned Wolsey, with warmth; and, to do him justice, he was a strict observer of ceremonial devotion.

"But why come you to your lowly prayers with a train that Mistress Anne likens to the peacock's trailing pride?—and so numerous that methinks you might therewith have affrighted Sennacherib and his myriads from the field?" said the king, with visible asperity.

Hitherto Henry had appeared to rejoice in the cardinal's magnificence as a maker in his work, and this question greatly surprised and alarmed him. "I have many enemies, sire, enemies to my person even!" he replied, with a poignant glance at Anne. "And especially among the rude vassalage here, who know no respects when they deem their idols are assailed. But I have come with few to-day, in very scorn of their lewd revilings—and these few are the very flower and prime nobility of my attendance!"

"Do you give your servants marigolds to wear as a badge then, cardinal?" said Henry, with a mixture of bitter jocoseness and rage. "Look yonder! See you your Lord Percy, what he wears—as who should say, I am a woman's fool?"

"Your grace should pardon the offence, if it be one! Have you not told me that yourself are the sun—because it might be known to all that you repaid the marigold's admiration, a million times all counting past?" said Anne, returning the prelate's malign glance in some such multiplying ratio.

"The sun! — the marigold!" repeated Wolsey, in amazement.

"Ay, cardinal! Look not so strangely on

this your own doing as you politicly do at times on others you effect!" said Henry. "But you understand us now!—and look that you keep your meny, henceforth, in better discipline! Now take the abbot's chair, the which I reserved on purpose for your state. I am well—most best—here!—or shall but be better when I have won the fair-winged boy ye wot of, to light me into paradise!"

Wolsey was obliged to understand this hint as a dismissal; and with an unusually heavy heart, and dejected mien, he proceeded to take the place so unwelcomely accorded to him. The sight of Sancgraal, officiating in the highest splendour, in the very act of the offertory, raising the gorgeous mass of plate from which he derived his name—amidst a pealing Hosanna from the choir—contributed in nowise to the restoration of the cardinal's tranquillity. But he derived some satisfaction from distinguishing the voice of Dan Gloria, in the exalted choir, finding it fully merited the peculiar reputation assigned it by Cromwel. Brooding over various projects of vengeance and hopefulness that gradually, by a train of association with the numerous intended victims surrounding him, arose to divert the cardinal's imagination, he was by no means

prepared for the new shock that awaited him, when, at the conclusion of the mass, he suddenly perceived the great pulpit was occupied, and by Raphael Roodspere!

Left by the cardinal in the manner we have seen, in the Chapel of the Kings, Roodspere remained for some minutes buried in an awful meditation. "The oracle I have so long besought, with bitter wailing and with tears, at last is granted me!" he murmured then, as if the audible response of some superior intelligence forced itself to his lips. "Soldier, thou has slept too long on thine arms! Harvester, why delayest thou to scatter the seeds of light?—The hostage of my bond-slavery is gone, and with hope, farewell fear! The time of this church must surely be nigh fulfilled, and God would have me openly declare that the night is spent and the day broken! Hence with this equivocating, plotted, written homily, eschewing all rocks of faithful doctrine, as if the vessel of the truth could be wrecked on them! I will speak as God shall prompt, only; and, speaking in defiance of this inhibition, assert the Christian liberty of man, and for ever throw off the yoke of Antichrist in his viceroy's! The people expect from me the praises of this

corpse-god, St. Edward!—and I will answer them, WHY SEEK YE THE LIVING AMONG THE DEAD!—I will preach to them the new resurrection of the Lord!"

Roodspere had attained the phasis of religious exaltation which, overlooking all earthly considerations, leaves heaven and man face to face, and enables the soul to act for awhile as if it were indeed free of the bondage of the flesh! Even Lily-Virgin was forgotten, or her recollection merged into the great infinitude of causation, setting the mighty impulse in his spirit at work! Yet, as if calmly and deliberately, he tore into a myriad fragments the careful MS. in which he had laboured to shun all entangling or direct assertion he deemed the monks could have used against him—scattered them over the flooring of the pompous shrine—and allowing himself no thought of what he was about to give utterance to, trusting all to the supreme guidance he now imagined—whether rightfully, or in the exaltation of enthusiasm, to prompt what he had determined upon—he presented himself in the great pulpit of Westminster, as if nothing had occurred in any way to change the plan which originally assigned it to him.

This pulpit was then placed on the left of the altar, adhering to the great pillar there: consequently, it was directly before Wolsey and the royal group. The former remarked the apparition with extreme dismay and wonder—and stooped and whispered to Gardiner, who stood at hand. "Nay, sir," whispered he, in reply, "if you have ordered him not to enter on any doubtful ground, he will surely obey: and now to prohibit his preachment at all, were to confess the monks' false leasings and inventions true!" Ere the words were well uttered, Roodspere's clear, melodious voice sounded to the most remote hearing, uttering the words of the text: "Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen!"

Roodspere's renown was already diffused in the court; and great curiosity was excited, among all who had not yet heard him, to verify whether the strange reports concerning the visitor's style of preaching could indeed be founded in fact. The startling nature of the text instantly riveted attention: above all, Anne Boleyn, perhaps in some degree to rid herself of the king's incessant and persecuting entreaties for a return to his passionate expressions, lent extreme attention to the

harangue. Others also, whose vigilance was prompted by far different motives, gave eager audience to every word, and entered many special ones in tablets—as if out of reverence, or that they might digest the argument at leisure. Gardiner and Father Gislebert were among these latter. Sancgraal, humbly representing to the queen that he must make some necessary preparations meanwhile, for his Miracle Play, glided behind the altar. But this appearance of indifference by no means pacified Cromwel's apprehensions, who, besides, with the most diligent research, could nowhere, high or low, discern his great counterbalance of intrigue, Dan Gloria.

We do not intend to inflict a sermon out of place upon our readers, however justified by the extraordinary circumstances and, so to speak, inspired eloquence, of the young protagonist who, fully sheathed in the armour of light, stepped forth to open conflict with the giant darkness that shadowed the horizon before him. Perhaps by the favour of heaven, reserving him for a greater task—perhaps, as mere humanists might conclude, by the influence of circumstances—but most fortunately for him, the direct concussion into which he cast himself was with the monastic notions and dogmas

whose blasting atmosphere surrounded him. Insensible to the presence of the tremendous critic who had achieved for himself the title of Defender of the Faith, and whose violent passions—destined to become the battering-rams of the Reformation—were all, at this period, enlisted on the contrary side; insensible to the presence of the Sanctuary rabble, devoted to the monks—of the monks themselves: of his amazed and wrath-stricken sire: of the bigoted but noble princess who had unconsciously removed the mainstay of the launch—Roodspere descended on the stormy sea which henceforth he was without ceasing to be tossed upon, until he made at length the everlasting port of rest.

Nature had made Roodspere eloquent; and the most profound learning and cultivation—some considerable practice in religious oratory—had fitted him well for his task. The fervour of his opinions, the strength of his arguments, the lucid beauty of his style, devoid of the cumbersome circumlocution of his antagonists, who felt the necessity of substituting words for ideas—and on which the influence of Grecian clarity and sublimation of reasoning, was perceptible even while necessarily falling into the style of thought and expression of his age

—fixed the most adverse attention. The latter habitude, indeed, induced him to adopt, throughout his sermon, a similitude of the decadence of the true Gospel Christianity, to the betrayal, death, and burial of Christ himself; likening in every imaginable form the destruction effected in the practice and faith of the church founded by that Divine original—especially all that the monks had done to deprave it—to the death-swathings, spices, and massive stone used in the sepulchring of the crucified Saviour! He compared the New Learning to the break of day over the tomb, when the sorrowful women came to renew their lamentations over their divine Slain One! —and few, indeed, could misunderstand finally that, in the resurrection he declared to have come to pass in those latter times, he alluded to the great change and sublimer theory of religion arising through every obstacle, before the awestricken world! For himself, with his visage shining with the light of the grand enthusiasm that possessed him, he might well have been accepted as a representative of one of the angelic twain who announced the primal resurrection!

A part of the audience, imagining that Wolsey must have secretly prompted this amazing

effusion, dared give no sign of disapproval; a much greater part listened with stifled murmurs of horror and wonder—some few with fascinated interest and delight! There was one man, in a tattered scholastic garb, with his hat drawn over his eyes, who leaned against a pillar, and wept without ceasing! But there was only another in all that vast audience who dared give open signs of adherence and satisfaction—and that one was Anne Boleyn—and to Henry VIII! The observation of Wolsey's uneasiness, which increased to visible agitation whilst Roodspere denounced the corruption and rottenness of the sepulchre into which the body of Christ, the church, had been thrust by its slayers and betrayers, only strengthened her rash adhesion. At the conclusion of the audacious rhapsody, she alone ventured to exclaim, and very audibly, "'And this man was also with him!'" A great variety of considerations withheld every other sign of applause or disapproval, in the entire audience besides, save that Henry's brows knotted with a dangerous and yet somewhat dubious frown. But, in fact, scarcely any time was given for the expression of sentiment. To the general relief and surprise, no sooner did Roodspere descend, unattended,

from the pulpit, than a blast of trumpets and an extraordinary uproar in the direction of the scene prepared for the Miracle Play, summoned all attention thither.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE MIRACLE PLAY.

Like a player
Bellowing his passion till he break the spring,
And his racked voice jar to the audience.
SHAKESPERE.

WE have before us a fine Black Letter manuscript—which we searched-out with no little difficulty from among the forgotten treasures in the abbey library — of Prior Sancgraal's grand festival mystery, entitled "The Devil's Apples"—as it was *intended* to be performed! An unforeseen circumstance considerably abridged it, and substituted a different catastrophe from the one therein devised. We shall only briefly allude to so much in this sacred drama as is necessary to elucidate its consequences, for, without seeming conscious that such they were, the clerical restorers of the stage indulged in what, to modern notions, appear the most extraordinary profanities and indecencies, in their treatment of the awful

subjects and personages forming the staple of their inventions. Yet it cannot be denied that this miracle play is the work of a singular genius in the dramatic art, in its rude infancy, and establishes claims for its writer to a more distinguished place than he has found among the predecessors of the consummate master, who, in the course of the same century, elevated the drama to its highest human interest.

It is a mistake to imagine that scenic decoration is altogether of modern date. It was the poverty of the first performers of stage plays, and their locomotive habits, that prevented them from adding much of its attractions to their exhibitions. In the miracle plays and mysteries, and in the courtly theatricals distinguished as masques and pageants, nothing could exceed the verisimilitude and pomp of scenic illustration. Long practice in the exhibition of church-dramas had rendered the monks of Westminster famous for their mechanical and spectacular skill, even before the travelled prior introduced the many improvements he acquired from studying the achievements of the Fraternity of the Passion, in Paris, who were supposed to have brought to perfection the art of sacred theatricals. It is true, the scene was immove-

able, and had the inconvenience of representing three places at once. But the usual divisions of the action of a miracle play were in three localities—Heaven, Earth, Hell; and as only one compartment was usually occupied by the performers at a time, these standing demarcations rather assisted than confused the intelligent spectator. The tapestry of flowers, which was drawn before the altar immediately at the conclusion of the high mass, had hitherto concealed the effecting of this customary arrangement, in the place where it was intended the performance should take place. This was in the recess of the altar, before the shrine, forming a stage nearly as extensive as that of some modern minor theatres. And now this beautiful natural dropscene being withdrawn, Wolsey, starting from a turbid revery, beheld what might well, in that age, be considered a triumph of scenic art.

A platform, lowered by mechanical agency, over the Chapel of St. Edward, hung with blue silk, spangled with stars, and cushioned with couches of silver damask, to represent clouds—not unaptly claimed to be considered the regions of bliss. The crypt below the altar-place, yawning open, and glowing internally like a blacksmith's forge, sufficiently

indicated those of eternal bale. The extensive stage furnished in Abbot Ware's mystic pavement, between this Heaven and Hell, was too naturally the position of the Earth—or rather of the Terrestrial Paradise, which the least-informed spectator immediately recognised was meant to be displayed in the middle scene. An enormous apple-tree, of an entirely new species, but readily accepted as a result of the prior's oriental experiences—being a gilded palm-tree, hung profusely with the finest specimens of the fruit that could be procured—shadowed the centre of the scene, with an eminently suggestive glare! An inscription, in large Gothic characters, on a scroll twisted like a serpent round the trunk, did nevertheless puzzle some few of the spectators who possessed the rare accomplishment of being able to read. The NEW LEARNING!—were the words convolving in their snaky folds, the fatal tree of knowledge of the garden of Eden! Wolsey stared in increased emotion when he discerned this—but the multitude burst into an universal murmur of delight as they gazed over the adjuncts of the scene, which, to their rude imaginations, realised all the wonders of the primeval elysium of man! A

bower of matted vineleaves and flowers, guarded by a couchant lion and leopard, represented that of our first parents, immediately behind the tree. A variety of the most beautiful flowers—many of which were scarcely known as yet in England—and a crowd of wonderful animals, chiefly those of fabulous zoology—unicorns, dragons, basilisks, and other terrible creations of fancy, exceedingly well painted or stuffed, completed the realisation of the popular ideal. But to Long Meg of Westminster's dissatisfaction, who had a particular curiosity on the subject, our first parents were not to appear *in puris naturalibus* on the scene. "Madame Eve," in particular, was to be masked and in full female costume, of the most decorous description—all tradition to the contrary notwithstanding! Her gossip, Friar Gildas, obligingly explained the reasons for this to be threefold. In the first place Eve was herself an allegory of the church, and therefore it behoved her, especially in those evil times, to show herself a pattern of modesty and propriety! Secondly, the Eve of this miracle play, was not the one deservedly expelled in Genesis, but another of the prior's own invention, restored to Eden—an allegory of the church, redeemed by the passion of our

Lord! And so it could not but reasonably be concluded that she would return in the costume she had adopted in the world, especially considering the extreme vanity and love of dress on all occasions evinced by the female sex! Thirdly, the queen's strict notions of female decorum would have rendered even a male representative of the character distasteful to her, that observed not the utmost external propriety; and after all, the worthy friar concluded, it was only the Italian fellow's singing that was wanted, and he had some vow, or a worse reason, which rendered him unwilling to show his face in the open day!

The performance had, however, very nigh come to an end at its outset. Wolsey starting, as we have mentioned, into sudden animation, muttered:—"At least I will have vengeance on these rogues!—at least I will compel obedience from them! They shall not bedaze the people with their trumpery!" And he made a gesture as if to rise and prohibit the performance. But Gardiner interposed. "My best lord!—if you do aught against them now, they surely will impeach your visitor of his heresies, with all men to the witness!" he exclaimed. For once, the opposition secretary was of the same opinion. "My lord," whispered

Cromwel, timidly, "They say the Italian is to appear in the play!—beseech you let it be played out!"

"Go then, thou counsellor of ill-luck, and rid me of your disastrous restoral! Go and tell Roodspere that, if he departs not from Westminster within the hour, he tarries on his own peril!—Give him ample means to bear his charges, and let him return to his college. I will care that Bilney's contagion shall be thence removed from before him!" said Wolsey, with a frowning harshness that filled Cromwel with dismay, while Gardiner's malignant smile irritated him to the utmost. But he saw it was no season for remonstrance, and hastened to obey. He had watched where Roodspere retired, and found him at a distance, in the shadow of one of the folds of the great north gate, in converse with that scholastic auditor, whose intense emotion during the sermon had not escaped even general notice. The latter had now forgetfully raised the flap of his large hat, and Cromwel, familiar with Bilney's person from his official position, suddenly, with a great increase of alarm, recognised him in the stranger. Without affecting to do so, at first, he delivered his message to Roodspere. "Return and tell your lord, Master Cromwel," was

the stubborn reply, "that while Lily Paulet is the captive of treacherous devices, I will never, for any fear or compulson, stir a step from where I may be of possible assistance and guardianship to her deserted orphanage!"

"Answer you thus, and stand here in conference with Master Bilney! Then are you utterly lost, and the idiot meddler, too, I thank you, who must interfere in a madman's behalf!" exclaimed Cromwel, in undisguised exasperation.

"Bilney is my name; I deny it not, master secretary," replied the reformer, and he spoke now in perfectly calm and rational tones. "But I came not hither to do harm to this, once my most beloved pupil and disciple, now my master and teacher! Believing, fearing—for we heard only tidings of his exterior welfare, he writing us none other, dreading interception, as I now learn—I came hither to repair the ill I deemed mine example had wrought; and even as repentant Judas returned before the high priest, Caiaphas, and laid down the price of the innocent blood he had betrayed, to throw the life your cardinal spared in recompense of a false recantation, in his face again! But I find there is no need. I have heard—we have all heard—

what Raphael Roodspere hath this day uttered, which is as a break of light in the midnight sky! And he hath convinced me that I can be more useful, scattering seed in the furrows, than plucking the mandrakes from the soil, awhile. The danger of my company I think therefore speedily to remove."

"Even now the cardinal has given order for your seizure the instant you are espied, which already you are, perchance!" said Cromwel, much perplexed. "If you are in earnest, not wholly to destroy your friend—in which task he is himself alone sufficient—take refuge at once in the neighbouring sanctuary, where they will never look for you—and flee thence as speedily as unobserved you may."

"The sanctuary!—yea, father, there you will be at hand to aid me perchance; and there, indeed, is a rank harvest awaiting the reaper's hand!" said Roodspere, whose affectionate interest in his friend's safety was not at all diminished by his own peril. "Nay, and if I am too hard pressed, mayhap I will rejoin you there!"

Bilney imbibed this idea with eagerness; and Cromwel had the satisfaction of inducing him not to add to Roodspere's danger by his continued presence. It was arranged

that he should retire immediately into the sanctuary, and lodge himself in the great hospice of the abbey, called St. Julian-of-the-Pilgrims. Thither Roodspere promised to bear him tidings of the results of the day, and Bilney quietly made his exit. Then ensued a full explanation between Cromwel and his disastrous *protégé*, which Roodspere thought he was no longer entitled to deny; and the consternated secretary was put in full possession of all the evil tidings as yet unknown to him. In the intense anxiety of this confabulation, neither took the slightest notice, for a considerable time, of what was enacting on the clerical stage, on a parallel with the spot they stood on. But suddenly a tumultuous uproar of applause, an expression of irrepressible popular admiration and delight, induced Cromwel to step a little forward and glance at the scene. He returned almost instantly, very pale, with all his hardy nerves in a tremble, and murmured in a faint, almost an awe-stricken tone: — "Roodspere, you are safe! We have them now! 'Tis she!—'tis Dalilah and—there needs scarcely any further proof—the wife of murdered Hunne!"

But we must trace the progress of the spectacle to this decisive point. When Cromwel

left his place beside the cardinal, purposely giving his retreat as much as possible the appearance of a departure, the performance had just commenced. A glow of crimson flame from the crypt, and a cloud of finely-scented smoke, covered the ascent, by ladders, of a crowd of personages, in whom the populace recognised the principal powers and dominations of the Gothic pandemonium. These bore but little resemblance to the "archangels ruined," the thunder-blasted celestials who, at a later period, thronged the Titanic imagination of Milton. They were true mediæval devils—such as the gloomy superstition of the northern nations had created, or transferred into Christianity, from their own mythologic stores. Forked tails, horns, and hideous masks, compounded the grotesque terror; but it was not slight, in that ignorant age, and, in any, the appearance of one of the actors would have struck a degree of awe. It was the monkish dramatist himself, who, to the surprise of many, considering his extreme aversion to bring his personal malformation into evidence, appeared in a character with which it unfavourably identified him—that of the archfiend himself! Was it in ascetic humiliation, or gloomy self-

mockery, or scorn of men's opinions, or consciousness that no one else would dare to perform the office he had assigned to his own part—or a combination of all these incentives, that overcame Prior Sancgraal's well-known dislike to exhibit his deformity? We know not, but so it was, that he appeared in all the attributes, and announced himself to the gaping audience, as he, who in heaven was styled Lucifer, in hell Sathanas, and Diabolus on earth—and there a familiar acquaintauce with them all!

Sancgraal's dark complexion—the glare of evil passions in his eyes—seemed, indeed, to give him by right the dread supremacy claimed by his crown of flaming red lacker and pitch-fork sceptre. But it appeared that his subjects were in a state of dangerous mutiny and revolt from his authority. A messenger had just arrived, whose speech opened the drama, bearing tidings of the completion of the prophecies which had announced the reversal of their greatest achievement, in the seduction and fall of man! This messenger was enacted by Cellarer Gildas, in the character of Belphegor—a fiend who was always expected to exhibit drollery and wit; and whose enactment very well suited with the Rabelaisian

jollity and buffoonery of the huge monk. He entered with marks of ludicrous consternation —his hair and tail bolt upright—amidst roars of laughter, in which Henry himself joined heartily, placing his hands on his broad haunches to relieve in some wise the weight of his towering frame. And yet this buffoon actor came, he averred, from the scene of the completion of the great tragedy of salvation, on the summits of Calvary; and he described it with every legendary addition invented by the monastic imagination, in a speech that mingled, in the most extraordinary manner, the highest sublimities of poetry with the lowest buffooneries and jests that could delight a populace equally ignorant and depraved! Abounding in what our age would justly esteem blasphemies of a truly fearful character, our ancestors listened with a mixture of breathless delight and merriment to the long narrative, and hailed its conclusion with deafening applause. "The fiend carry all Lollards and their sermons, say I! This is what *I* like!" shouted Long Meg, in particular approval of her gossip's recitation.

Sathanas replied as Sathanas might have been expected to reply. He treated the whole account with incredulous derision, with sar-

casms and counter arguments, that might not have misbecome the lips of the future philosophers of the *Encyclopédie*. If such a being could readily have been imagined, in that age and in a monastery, some atheistic unbeliever might have been supposed holding up to ridicule and refutation the whole biblical theory of the redemption! Sancgraal was before his age in that, at least in England. In Italy and France the fearful sport was begun!—He refused to credit the tidings brought. The fiend of derision, he said, was ever a cowardly one. He had been dismayed out of his senses by a little thunder and lightning, a noonday darkness, which was to be ascribed to some accidental eclipse! He argued the improbability that the celestial Father would deliver his only Son to the most exquisite torments, to preserve a race of insignificant beings who had always shown themselves rebellious to His will, and unworthy of the least mark of His divine benevolence. He described man, in a strain of withering contempt, as a presumptuous nondescript, created out of nothingness merely to degrade the spiritual world by allying his essences with dust and earth. He derided its pretensions to share the immortality of the higher intelligences, which securely defied even omnipotent wrath to des-

troy. He recited at length the most memorable acts of treason and ingratitude exhibited by the human race throughout the biblical record, against the sovereign Creator; from the date of his own successful temptation of the first pair in paradise. Thence he drew the inference that no such tremendous sacrifice, on their behalf, could have been made, and that Belphegor lied.

The latter gave the lie in return, in the most approved style of the gallants of the day; and a violent recrimination, taken part in with great dramatic energy and variety, by the sooty conclave, infinitely diverted the populace by the violent interchange of a truly infernal Billingsgate. In the midst of the wrangle, Beelzebub, a winged fiend, suddenly made his appearance, and volunteered a statement to settle the dispute. He had been on an excursion round Eden, stealing the flowers which at times unguardedly bloomed over its adamantine walls, and striving to ascertain if some unclosed inlet might not yet remain. And there he had espied Madame Eve, who was explained to be the church, and her husband, who was explained to be mankind in general, solemnly reinstated by the Angel of the Fiery Sword himself, the great expiation having at length

been made that restored them to the forfeited seats of bliss!

The fury of the discomfited fiend on this announcement, in all possibility disclosed something of the furnace of passion raging in its exhibitor's heart. He abandoned himself to a truly appalling burst of fury and maledictions, terrible as the thunder and blasting lightning of the wildest storm! But our fathers were not easily shocked by any latitude of expression in the infernal regions, and had by no means adopted the modern canon of criticism which confounds an author with his personages, or, at least, with the discreditable ones! This outbreak was interspersed with the most indecent banter and practical jests on the part of the infernal Merry Andrew; and, in fact, Friar Gildas possessed a comic talent that would have placed him high among burlesque actors on a modern stage. Disdaining the assistance of a mask—and none, indeed, could have improved his sensual, rubicund, and laughter-provoking visage, for the part—he kept the whole church in a continual roar, as much by his gestures as his words, and balanced the gloomy preeminence of his lord. Finally, stirred by these mocks and gibes, to a desperate measure or reassertion, Sathanas declared his resolve to

turn the tables again on his vanquisher, by again misleading restored Eve! The tree of death-giving knowledge, he said, still flourished in Paradise, and the first of a weak and credulous sex, after all her experience, was still as capable of being deceived as ever! And, in truth, he brought many examples to bear upon the point, that tended to confirm it.

On the other hand, Belphegor insultingly replied, that he talked like an old fool who, grown imbecile with years, imagined he could repeat the feats of his youth. Woman, he averred was no longer the simple creature she had been, to be cheated with the rosy colour and fragrance of an apple, rotten at the core! She had become more artful than the fiend himself! A bitter spirit, truly worthy of the cloister, breathed through this denunciation of the fairer half of humanity. Regardless of the anachronisms he committed in his attack, Belphegor alleged innumerable examples of the artifice and falsehood of women, from histories sacred and profane, ballads and legends, scripture and romance, indifferently—from the Talmud, and the great story-book of the middle ages, the Gesta Romanorum. By some this episode was imagined to be contrived to exhibit the great learning of the writer; by others, and

among them Anne Boleyn, as an effusion of monastic bitterness against the whole sex.

But Sathanas only drew an argument in his own favour from this exposition. The female nature was then unchanged! full of vanity, presumption, and curiosity — eager only of present good, incapable of estimating the excellence and beauty of merely spiritual delights. The women listened, as they mostly do, to a religious scolding—with great tranquillity and edification. The men laughed and applauded to the echo; and King Henry swore the monk knew more truths than he had ever learned in his missal. The rest of the devils cordially joined (as was natural!) in this view of the capacity and nature of woman—and all but Belphegor agreed in the propriety of supporting the archfiend in his renewed attempt against the unhappy race of man. The latter declared off, in a ludicrously profane description of the terrors and sufferings he had experienced for his share in the former revolt. In a sly aside Belphegor even intimated his purpose of betraying the counsels of the conspirators to the supreme powers. Meanwhile, he recommended his companions, if they hoped to acquire the necessary craft and deceit to

effect their purpose, to go to school for awhile, either at Wittenberg or Cambridge!

Arrogant Sathanas, however, declared, that neither of those famous Universities could teach him anything—that he himself had taught the sophistry that rendered them so illustrious. A consultation was then entered into on the best means of beguiling the acquired sagacity of "Madame Eve" as she was always respectfully called. Rejecting his old disguise of the serpent, as one by no means subtle enough—after listening with scorn to a variety of propositions from others of the fiendish council, the archfiend announced that he should assume a garb which he had always found efficacious—that of False Semblance, or Hypocrisy! Not altogether rejecting Belphegor's hint, but admitting that the best mantles of this description were made at the latter university, he announced his intention to procure a disguise in Cambridge. And what might be called the first act of the "Devil's Apples" concluded with a tumultuous dance and revel of the fiends, expressive of their triumphant expectation—but in which the gloomy and lame monarch deigned to take no share.

The second part must be more briefly dis-

missed. The profanity, probably altogether unconscious in that age — since even the pious queen perceived no harm in it—which introduced the tremendous personages of the Trinity in familiar conversation, will scarcely bear allusion to in ours. Yet the spectacle was not deficient in a degree of sublimity and elevation, far, indeed, below the awful grandeur of the subject—but evincing to the profoundly judging that Sancgraal had not even the excuse of that materiality of mind which is at the root of modern infidelity. A celestial court was held, as it appeared, for the reception of the victorious Saviour, on his ascension from the troubled sphere he had redeemed. The division assigned to heaven was crowded with the disguised choristers of Westminster, chaunting a Te Deum, that did the highest credit to the musical discipline of the Italian præcentor. The Father, exalted on a throne, and distinguished by a long white beard, a crown and sceptre, with the Holy Ghost on his left hand, who was crowned with rays, and held the emblematic silver dove—a lamp, spurting tongues of fire, in his hand—received the ascending Son, amidst the pæan of the heavenly host, and the joyful cries and even tears of the gazing multitude! They

discerned no incongruity in the assumption of such personages by Father Nicholas, of Cologne, the master of the Westminster schools, and two of his favourite scholars. The Reformation separates us in every moral notion, almost as completely from our ancestors as if they had been another order of beings!

A favourite monkish laudation was now introduced; and the Son was made to demand, as the principal reward of his sufferings, the exaltation of his mother into the seats of eternal bliss, without tasting of death. A secondary point appeared to be the restoration of Adam and Eve—man and the church—to paradise! But this was announced as being already effected—when suddenly the treacherous Belphegor, hoping to win his pardon by the act, entered, and announced the renewed projects of Sathanas and his fiends. It was declared, however, that, tempt as he might, the gates of hell should never again prevail against the church; and the supreme Three agreed to descend into the Terrestrial Paradise, and concealing themselves among the trees of the orchard, enjoy the discomfiture and final confusion of their crushed antagonist! Belphegor was permitted to ac-

company, as it was declared, to satisfy him, that he had no claims on the vast reward of pardon which he required for his delation—in reality, that the audience might not miss their favourite merrymaker in the ensuing scene. Then, attended by the whole choir of angels, chaunting a Hallelujah in full chorus, the celestial trio descended by ladders placed for the purpose, upon the middle scene, and all observation was thenceforth concentrated thereupon. But hardly had the cœlicoli concealed themselves behind the trees, and bowers of the paradise, when a crowd of demons, equally anxious to witness the success of their chief, entered stealthily on tiptoe; and, to the infinite amusement of the spectators, concealed themselves also behind the wild beasts, or clustered on the rocks, or slung themselves on various seemingly impossible places, with a gymnastic skill that provoked incessant laughter and applause. And thus the allegory of heaven and hell alike at watch during the renewed temptation of mankind was made clear to the meanest capacity! But Belphegor, who had fixed his unwelcome society on the Son, represented by a tall bashful novice of the Abbey, allowed no doubt to remain upon the subject. He explained

this state of things in a series of bantering speeches, which nevertheless gave some historical notion of the position of the great controversy that then divided men's minds, viewed altogether from a papistical point of view, and including an exceedingly dexterous and lavish compliment to the services and ability displayed by the king in the defence of the church. Prior Sancgraal profanely put into the mouth of the Holy Spirit himself, that the king's book against Luther, had been written by his own direct inspiration!

This stage manœuvre effected, a blaze of light, from artificial lenses, suddenly directed all attention on the Fatal Tree. At the same moment, a charming concert of flutes and recorders, and other soft instruments, caught the general attention, sounding from among the trees and flowers. This music was so unusually sweet and elaborate, that all agreed the prior must have brought it home from his distant wanderings in Italy, or that the devil had assisted the præcentor to compose it. But the concealed angels played it, and by a natural contrariety, the demons interrupted, or at least contrasted it, with a frequent and dissonant braying of harsh trumpets and squeaking fifes. Above all, Belphegor showed

a remarkable talent in the production of all manner of ludicrous sounds on a horn. But harmony and dissonance were alike surmounted, or charmed into silence, by the unrivalled melody of a female voice now audible from the bower, singing a lay which we find designated as "Madame Eva's Ballade of Thanksgiving" in the manuscript of the play, written probably by Prior Sancgraal's own hand. It is too long for transcription, filling nearly two columns of the dense text-hand, but is no ill specimen of poetry; and, aided by the magic of the harmonious voice that embodied it in utterance, the audience listened with the fascinated attention of the Tartarean myriads crowding to the song of Orpheus. It is no wonder that at the conclusion of the lay, when the songster *himself*—for no one as yet imagined the possibility of so wonderful an anomaly as a female performer, and in a clerical play—emerged from the bower; it is no wonder, we say, he was received with what in modern opera parlance would be styled a *furore*. Yet, when the multitude had time to notice the personage who now offered himself to their gaze more particularly, murmurs of wonder mingled with the storm of applause. And in spite of the explanation

liberally volunteered, that the Italians could disguise themselves so as to resemble whatever they pleased—a vague idea of the carnivals, transmitted by travellers to the populations of the north—very many there could scarcely persuade themselves that they were not gazing on a female figure of extraordinary beauty, and full as extraordinary a display of it! It is true that "Madame Eve" did not present herself in her *lucus-à-non-lucendo* costume—a circumstance that would have much less surprised our liberal ancestors than her adoption of the garb in which she now appeared. The bosom bare to the girdle; the fine limbs, scarcely concealed by silk of the flimsiest texture; the unmasked visage which, in spite of its haggish and exhausted expression, was still of a remarkable beauty; the now glossy and polished hair, entwined with a wreath of gorgeous flowers—were so completely those of a woman, that it seemed as if no stage artifice could have produced the illusion. Nay, it was obvious that none could have been resorted to; for the colours of the flesh changed, and to something of a womanish glow of crimson, when Dan Gloria himself became aware of the effect produced by his entrance. In all other respects—in gestures, in look, in the

wild fire flaming in the eyes, and, after a brief pause, in the rallied effrontery and audacity of manner—Dan Gloria might well have been taken as identical with one of those famous Venetian courtesans who had succeeded to the evil renown of the Aspasias and Phrynes of antiquity. On the whole, perhaps, Dame Juliana expressed a very predominant opinion, when she exclaimed, "Oh, our Lady! the devil must have got into the abbey to tempt the holy prior, withouten any doubt! Yet, mercy on me! *he* is to tempt *her!*"

When the applause and astonished murmur had somewhat subsided, "Madame Eve" resumed her part, expatiating in a novel species of musical modulation, or recitative, on the delight she experienced on being restored to her old haunts. This discourse might be said to reverse the lament of Milton's Eve; and although too constantly straining at theological similitudes, it abounded in natural and affecting allusions, evincing that Sancgraal had in him a true fount of poesy, however turbid, wild, and foamy the stream. And when Eve recognised the fatal tree, and descanted on the misfortunes her heedless appetite had brought upon mankind—the woe, the sin, the anguish, and the death!—the jeremiad had in it some-

thing of a drear sublimity and sorrow which even the rude and ferocious populace felt to be the effusion of other than mere monastic gloom. But when Eve, entering on a species of exculpation of herself, launched into praises of the exquisite colour, fragrance, and overpowering temptation of the fruit, the language she used seemed rather fitter to describe a vehement sensual passion of a very different kind! And this, accompanied by a continual wail of remorse and regret, seemed to some listeners like a confession of a miserable and guilty past on its inventor's own part. And it was observed by several that during the delivery of the speech, Dan Gloria's eyes wandered among the assemblage as if in search of some object they found not! But more especially when, with an increasing glow of expression, she praised the still deceptive beauty of the fruit, and gave utterance to a mingled desire and terror yet again to inhale its delicious smell, and with purer admiration savour its delight!—At this propitious moment for his task, Sathanas, properly disguised, entered! Sathanas, no longer in his serpent slough, but in the spick-and-span new robe of a doctor of divinity, with a shock of frizzled flax on his head that ludicrously imitated the

fair hair, and a wax mask that presented an exact likeness of the fine visage, of Raphael Roodspere! Sancgraal's club-foot and a forked tail alone preserved the identity of the original character!

It may be imagined with what a mingled uproar of laughter and indignation this visual libel, and acted caricature, was received. The design of the whole allegory now became evident; but the murmurs of the scanty and scattered partisans of Roodspere, and of the new doctrines, were speedily overpowered in the uproarious delight of the courtiers and of the Sanctuary rabble. Yet, contrary to all expectation, Wolsey himself made no sign on either side—and the drama might apparently have proceeded without any interruption on his part, but for an extraordinary accident that brought it abruptly to a close. We find in the manuscript, directions given to the actor, at this point, to approach Madame Eve, "with a great wiliness of humility:" but far otherwise—as if seized with a sudden paroxysm of frenzy—the prior no sooner caught sight of his fellow actor in the interlude, than with the cry of a wild beast, and more than the savage fury of one, he rushed upon the luckless mother of mankind, and with insane

violence and buffetings hurtled her off the stage into the bower! "Drunkard, blasphemer!—what dost thou here abusing the eyes of christian men with thine obscene mummery?" he yelled, as he accomplished this violence. "Good brethren, come forth; we will no more of this!—the slave is bribed by the Lutherans to counterfeit a woman of vile Venice—and this despite my most positive ordination! Keep him out of sight till we have time to judge his delinquency, brother Wenlock!—but craving the queen's grace's pardon, it is as well that it is as it is, for the poison of these Lollards' doctrines, it is noted, is but diffused by their open accusations and condemnation! Wherefore, although it was my purpose to put my charges against our heretic visitor, as it were, in his own mouth, under the form of his temptations to Madame Eve, to eat of the second crop of the tree of destruction, which is called the New Learning!—rather will I now, with such of my brethren as support and will bear witness of the truth—casting myself and them at the feet of that royal majesty which hath most rightfully achieved the supreme doctorate of the faith!—present a true indictment of our charges against him, and which, on peril of our lives, we will, to the letter, prove!"

In obedience to this summons all the *dramatis personæ*—supernals and infernals—came out of their hiding-places, and advanced in a tumultuous and confused mass, in the prior's train, towards the king. The queen and the cardinal arose at the same instant—and the confusion and curiosity of the multitude were so vehemently increased, that it was with great difficulty, and by a liberal distribution of blows, that the guard could keep back the pressure.

"What is the matter, sirs? What would ye with me?" said Henry, gazing over the extraordinary group, in their miracle garbs, kneeling before him, and uttering huge sighs and lamenting outcries.

"Solely, sire, that it would please you to examine this book of the teachings and affirmations of the visitor, whom the cardinal has placed over us, in defiance of the privileges granted us by your canonized predecessor! And judge, by the light of your inspired wit and wisdom, whether they are heretical or not!" said Sancgraal, humbly presenting to the king the carefully digested document, which he now took good care should not be of the temptations of St. Anthony!

CHAPTER XXIV.

CHARLEMAGNE AND ST. DOMINIC.

Belike this show imports the argument of the play!

HAMLET.

THE dominant passions in Henry's mind, at this period, were all flattered by the appeal to his judgment on points of orthodoxy. The despotism of his character, his high opinion of his own abilities and scholastic attainments—a species of vanity, supposed to be at all times very powerful, the vanity of an author—were all enlisted dexterously in their favour by the monks. But, however exasperated with Roodspere's conduct, some remains of natural affection, or indignation at the assault on his own power included, induced Wolsey to interfere, and with vehemence. "Sir! this is no matter for lay judgment, and is of my jurisdiction only!" he exclaimed. "Your grace hath a perfect illumination in all points of theology—are skilled past belief in all knotty conclusions of the canon law—but our holy

father named you defender, not judge, of the faith! I will myself examine into any charges that can be brought against my visitor, but I know beforehand they are all only false inventions and calumnies of the monks, who are made mad by his detection of their enormities and offences against all religion and discipline!"

"His grace's self could hear whether he preaches Catholic doctrines, within this hour! and I and my brethren do appeal from your judgment, lord cardinal, as being altogether biassed and unjust!" returned Sancgraal.

"Nay, 'tis a very *natural* leaning, lord prior, as I have heard!" said Anne, unable to suppress the tart pleasantry, though her feelings were strongly turned in favour of Roodspere. The king glanced at her.

"Ho, by my fay!" he exclaimed, with a boisterous laugh, "we have heard some whisper of this ere now, and thought we knew the mintage! Well, well, we shall not disfavour your doctor on that account, cardinal, an you will leave his judgment to our poor lights!"

"My liege, we are both most falsely accused! My visitor hath but spoken as I would have him against these men, whose

obscene lives and, in every respect, scandalous demeanour, do us more damage than all Martin's ravings put together!" said Wolsey. It was seldom, indeed, that the cardinal and Anne Boleyn were of a similar opinion, but on this occasion it would seem they were. "In truth, my liege," she observed eagerly, "if this be so, wise judges set small store by the witnessing of notorious rogues or proved criminals, speaking against men of good reputation! Were I your gracious self, I would first hear what my lord cardinal and his visitor can prove against the monks here, and then listen or not to their accusal of him, as themselves may seem to merit or no audience and credence!"

"Damsel! methinks you do something pass the modesty of your place, to speak in such a presence and cause!" the queen now said, turning with austere dignity to the agitated group behind her throne, "But we trust we shall not ourself lose our prayer with our king and lord! which we make on behalf of the holy and persecuted monks of St. Edward, beseeching your grace to give ear to their just plaints, and rid them of this usurping and heretical visitation!"

"Lady mine! we will do as we have said!"

replied Henry; and though all present were aware that the plan had been suggested by Anne Boleyn only. "Unless my lord legate deems we are not competent to such a judgment, we will decide in both causes, sitting in the chapterhouse of Westminster, with his good allowance!—on St. Luke's day next, which is within a sennight. And taking matters in this order, we will first, as is but just, hear what master visitor can allege to weaken or destroy the credence of his enemies' testimony, by evidence of their own vileness and malicious purpose therein!"

Wolsey stared with extreme surprise; but he was too well acquainted with the king's tyrannous humour—too habitually subservient to his will—to venture on any further open contravening of it at this moment. He saw that his most declared enemies looked at him in eager expectation of some such continued struggle against so manifest an usurpation of his cherished ecclesiastical power, and he determined to disappoint them. "If your grace hath not, by right of your infinite wisdom and high doctrine, that of exercising the office you desire, I give it you!—and you best know what need there is at this time, when the pope's person is in hands so unfilial, that my own

powers should be held absolute and uncontestable in England!"

He spoke with a significance which the king apprehended. "Ay, true! Ay, true!" he said, with a somewhat confused glance at his consort.

"But, sir, this libel of accusations should remain meanwhile in other hands, for words often dwelt upon, by whatever iteration, do stamp themselves at last in men's minds as beliefs!" said Anne, continuing her interposition in favour of Roodspere.

"Be my *Custos Rotulorum* then till I demand the book of you again on St. Luke's day; but study not therein lest you likewise should take the infection!" replied Henry, handing the elaborately prepared parchment of the monks to the beautiful pleader, who instantly accepted, and smilingly transferred it to a pouch or reticule which the ladies then carried at their girdles, richly ornamented, and secured with a clasp. At the same time, to Roodspere's surprise, who had drawn near to be in readiness to respond to the monk's allegations, she gave him a slight but strangely intelligible nod! Alliance and sympathy could scarcely have been more strongly expressed by words than in that momentary gesture!

"Look then, lord prior and good brethren, and you, master visitor! that ye be in readiness with your proofs and counter proofs by St. Luke's next before us! We have evil enow seeking us, our Lady wots well! but—to please our loving consort!—we would put us to worse infinitely! And now, Mistress Anne, will it please you walk, and see our feathered chivalry do their devoir?" said Henry, with a broad, eager smile, as if he felt that he had deserved some good recompense for the zeal he had shown in complying with the lady's behests. Anne coloured vehemently, and bridled like a fiery steed that feels the check and the spur at the same instant, for her eye caught the queen's as it flashed hurriedly away from Henry's licentiously glowing gaze. She curtseyed her acquiescence in vexed silence.

"Come, our daughter and lady princess, you have not yet paid your devotion to St. Edward!—My lord prior, we would have of your attendance, and make our grateful offering to the blessed king!" said Katharine, rising with an expression of offended majesty in her whole demeanour. "Let us hence!"

The discomfited prior slowly, and almost with visible reluctance, complied with this

request, or command; and at the same moment that Henry, leading Anne Boleyn, with a joyous troop of the courtiers and ladies who availed themselves of the queen's permission, quitted the abbey-church, on their way to the appointed arena of the cock-fight in the Cloisters—Katharine retired with her daughter and Sancgraal, to the chapel of the shrine. She paused for an instant as they entered the ambulatory, and looking back at the glittering group receding in the nave; "Poor gilded fly in the web of Henry's lusts!" she murmured; "what triumph is this to thee?"

"Sovereign lady!" replied Sancgraal, with prophetic vengefulness, "from all I have seen, if you yield any way to the torrent, who can say but that this mercer's grand-daughter may not yet usurp the seat of—"

"Peace, peace, my lord — our daughter listens!" replied the unhappy queen, with a gesture that imposed silence.

Wolsey meanwhile remained fixed in motionless amaze, gazing also after the vanishing train, until it gleamed in the exit at the western porch, in the bright light, like a floating pomp of many-coloured evening clouds, bearing the tempest in the shadows

of their splendour. "The knaves—the never-wearied plotters!" he muttered; "and the berry-brown young Jezabel to take such bitter part against me—ay, and to triumph so utterly!—Nay, Mistress Nan, this will not serve! We will have no loves, were they as light and passing as a lavender breeze, with any of the Howard blood! Look to it, sallow and shallow Norfolk! in avenging thine old comate's scaffold, mayhap thou wilt stumble on thine own! Wolsey is yet an out-match for thee and all thy kin! But things have gone ill with me ever since I began at Westminster! Can it be that the curse of St. Edward hath a potency which—no, no; it is this madman's evil star that crosses and shadows mine!—Cromwel!" he exclaimed, starting to discern that he was now almost alone, with little more than his own retinue lingering around. "Cromwel! hast thou set the fool in motion back to his proper burrow in Cambridge?"

"My lord, he utterly refuses to stir from Westminster, while Mistress Paulet remains in danger and captivity—and I trow me, the prior has her in a strong prison, in the queen's palace!" replied Cromwel in an under tone. "But, my dear lord, your visitor is in no danger

if you will go by my advice, and openly convict his accusers of the felonies that can be proved upon them!"

"Peace, peace!—I care not for his danger!—See you not in what myself stand? See you not how this French hackney hath the upper with us now?" returned Wolsey. "Where is this outrageous fellow?—myself will let him know, that if he tarries, he tarries at his own peril, and that I will interfere no more in his behalf if the wagging of my little finger could save his whole body!"

"I know not, sir—he vanished suddenly!" said Cromwel, soothingly; "but at least your grace would not refrain from taking vengeance, and putting your will in force among these monks—and I now know that which shall more convict them in men's eyes than all the allegations I have yet been enabled to present you, against them and their murtherous prior!"

"What say you, master secretary? What worse can even be imagined?" returned Wolsey, yet with some interest.

"Your grace beheld their pretended Italian! Eyes could approve it, but by other means I I have learned—*he* is a woman!" replied Cromwel.

"Even so! proves that more germane to the prior's condemnation?" said Wolsey, with something rather of disappointment in his tones.

"Let your grace promise to keep my revelation from my envious fellow's knowledge, who, I cannot but think, betrays my counsel among them here, and I will add what shall amaze you further!" said Cromwel, with agitation. The cardinal nodded. "Why, then, sir, I am assured, and can prove to all men's satisfaction, that this woman is the wife of Marchant Hunne! whose murder, and at whose instigation perpetrated, become thence most clearly manifest!"

"To all men's satisfaction!—nay, only to the satisfaction of the vile railers of the populace, and of heretic revilers everywhere!" exclaimed Wolsey, with anything but the triumph and pleasure Cromwel hoped to excite. "Know ye not that the mere suspicion of foul play in that matter, and my support of the clergy's rights in it, gave me my first rude jolt in the king's favour, from which I have scarcely steadied yet?—Look that thou keep this legend a secret, master secretary, on pain of utter dismissal from my favour and service!—and win your ally and coadjutor to the

like reticence, or I will make common cause with the monks, and put a padlock on his tongue he shall not easily unlock!"

"My lord, he is neither ally nor coadjutor of mine—nor have I any sway with him, or your grace may well conclude I had counselled him to leave my purposed bride alone!" replied Cromwel, in infinite disappointment and surprise, increased by the sudden junction of Gardiner, who had disappeared for several minutes.

"Guilty, alack, my lord, guilty!" said Gardiner, in a hypocritical moaning tone, as he approached, contradicted by the joyful expression in his eyes. "He has taken refuge in the Sanctuary! I myself saw him enter the gates!"

"So much the better—you bring me good news, indeed, Stephen, and ever do!" said Wolsey, reanimating wonderfully at this intelligence; and Cromwel did not think proper to contradict it, though he secretly concluded Roodspere had only gone into the Sanctuary to fulfil his promise to Bilney. "But we have other matters that take up all our thoughts, as a sponge the water it is set in! Heard ye ever of the prophecy, Stephen!—one of wise Mother Shipton's, whereof we made an idle

study in our boyhood! 'When the dun cow rides the bull, then, priest, beware thy skull!' This brown wench that troubles us so much, and the king giving the bull in his quarterings for Richmond! What say ye?"

"Ay, sir, and even now—opportunity is much whether with man or woman! I would have your grace attend in this cock-match, too! Your enemies are too many with his highness there now!" said Gardiner, not certainly with disinterested alarm.

"You are right, Stephen! But how will my robe show in such a spectacle?" said Wolsey, musingly, and at the moment his eye fell upon the person of the Lord Percy, who, pallid with anxiety and inward pangs of jealousy and passion, leaned against a huge vase of holy water, richly scented, for the use of the royal and distinguished visitors of the festival. "Yea, we will to this sport royal also! Son Percy, come hither awhile; we would speak with you!"

The young man advanced with visibly slow and reluctant steps. "Do the very children of my household rebel against me—or why wear you this waspish-tongued lady's badge?" continued the cardinal.

Urged on by many impulses, but chiefly by

the remembrance of Anne's commands, and the peril of her present position, the timorous lover managed at length to break the spell of his imperious lord, and answered with tolerable firmness, "I wear marigolds, sir, not in defiance of your grace's contrary pleasure, but because I love Mistress Anne; and she would have me wear them for her sake!"

"Why, then, she loves you in return?" responded the cardinal, eagerly.

"I have some happy cause to deem so, my best lord!" replied Percy, with tremulous humility.

"Why, then, it must needs be that ye love one another, *par amours*?—You are, in all but a public benediction, Mary Talbot's husband! —And so ye have enjoyed of each other's frank society doubtless ere now?" said Wolsey, breathlessly.

"My lord, she is the Duke of Norfolk's niece! Other than honest thoughts were a madness!" said Percy, with the warmth of indignation.

"By holy Peter! there are none out of Bethle'm hospice half so mad as such!" returned the cardinal, furiously. "But I will let the king know, thou most lunatic of all mad fools! that we have nought to do in this

audacious crossing of his pleasure, wherein he is as peremptory as the arrest of death! Give me these marigolds, and hie thee home, and bleed and fast thee out of thy voluptuous frenzy, if thou wouldst escape a less skilful surgeon than Canon Butts, in the doomster of the Tower's axe!"

So saying, he roughly, with his own hands, tore away the bunch of marigolds from Lord Percy's breast, and keeping hold of it, set off at a rapid pace through the nave in the king's footsteps. Percy remained immoveable in petrified dismay, and the rest of the cardinal's attendance, not daring to offer him any condolence, hurried past him in their lord's pursuit.

During this brief scene in the church, Henry and his court had arrived on the scene of action in the cloisters. Throughout the long passage of the nave, the king and Anne Boleyn headed the whole procession so far that they enjoyed—at least one of the two might be said to do so—what might be considered a private conversation, of some duration. Henry purposely set off at a rapid pace, and the courtiers, divining his object, took care to follow in his wake at a sufficient distance. The king glanced back once

or twice to observe that he was not too closely followed, and then seemed to give himself up to the pleasure of an unreserved intercourse with his brilliant companion. But it was observed, on the contrary, that Anne frequently averted her face with an appearance of petulance and disdain. "I do beseech your royal grace!—We have exchanged forgivenesses—I pray you give not prying eyes matter to report against me to my lady the queen—albeit as causelessly as I profess it shall ever be between your majesty and Anne Boleyn!" she exclaimed on one of these occasions.

"We shall be quit of her sour humours altogether anon, sweetheart!—have thou no care of that," replied Henry to the startled maid of honour. But he perceived instantly that he had somewhat betrayed his secret, and with the dissimulation he managed to unite with all the fury and brutality of his passions, continued, "Why should the queen whiten to hear tell of a combat of cocks, that was bred up to the gory bull-fights of Spain, which it sickened our hearts to behold, though but in mimicry, when the emperor feasted us at Calais?—But, mistress mine! you bid me hope for the reward of my long service and

pining fidelity?—when shall it be? There is no guerdon you can ask, sweet Anne, which Henry will not joyfully pay in entrance-fee to that earthly paradise he would not barter for a heavenly one!"

"I have oft already answered your grace," returned Anne, with angry vivacity, "and I do beseech of your royal benignity to take it as a surety fixed as this goodly church over our heads, that I shall not change! Mine honour, I have told your grace, is the chief part of the dowry I am like to bring a husband — but that, heaven aiding, any such luckless wight shall receive unstained as at my birth I inherited it from a most noble and virtuous mother!"

"Your husband! Let me see that man in all England—ay, or in all the world—shall dare to take that name from thee!" returned Henry, with frightful vehemence. "Know ye of such a man?—for, by my kingdom's crown, he shall put his neck in the Tower maiden's arms, sooner than in thine!"

"Nay, sir, nay—but I live in no absolute despair but that your royal notice may lift me yet into some complaisant courtier's regard!" replied Anne, with affected playfulness, but real alarm. "And now, with your gracious

leave, I will join the flock—from which you have singled me out in my lady queen's eyes to as little advantage as the wild swan whose wings are to be clipped to keep the rest from venturing on flights so high!"

Partly in anger, and partly in conviction of the prudence of what she desired, Henry suffered the lady then to join the fair bevy with whom in their train they had now entered the cloisters. Everything was arranged in readiness for the sport. The arena for the conflict was beneath the shadow of the vast and ancient cedar of Lebanon at that time growing in the centre of the smooth esplanade of green turf that carpeted the Great Cloister. A convenient-sized ring, secured by a rope on pegs, at proper intervals, was strewed with fine gravel as a pit, and a chair was placed for the king under the cedar-tree. The rest of the spectators were expected to stand. Charlemagne from his cage surveyed these preparations with a knowing eye, and evident expectation of battle. Friar Gildas arrived almost at the same time as the king, carrying renowned St. Dominic affectionately in his arms—himself red as fire with enthusiasm and haste, and puffing like a steam-engine on half stroke.

Henry seated himself with a burly sigh, and with a look of discontent and vexation that escaped the attention of few, exclaimed:—"Get this gear in readiness with what speed ye may!—Mistress Anne, will you wager some small matter on my bonny cock? A woman's true drift and purposes, against a handful of thistledown, shall suffice!"

"Nay, if I wager so it shall be against some weathercock's stability—whom the invisible wind turns at his pleasure!—not against a cock of so ripe theology as St. Peter's, which of old rebuked an apostle!" said Anne, with sarcastic levity. "Nay, sir," she continued, with a sudden change of complexion, "I will wager on St. Dominic—for here comes the scarlet which doth outflare the turkey-cock's pride, and makes your own royal crimson pale!"

Wolsey arrived with his attendance in the cloister as she spoke, and pointed the meaning of the observation. "What doth the cardinal haunting us thus?" muttered Henry. "Are we safe nowhere from his supervision and authority?"

"Mark ye that?" whispered the Duke of Suffolk to the Duke of Norfolk.

"Mistress Anne! I marvel you do play and

tamper with his highness's humour thus! I would as soon be shut up with his great lion in the Mews, and twitch his mane and beard for my sport!" observed Jane Seymour, to her destined volatile and daring predecessor.

"Ah! milkmaid, Jane!—even so, methinks I could find a way to dabble and play amid his grisly locks unharmed!"

There was something of terror in the aspect of Henry VIII., even in his well-pleased moods; but now there was a wrathful moodiness in his looks that might have scared even a politician so adroit and accustomed to vanquish difficulties and circumvent the passions of others as Wolsey. But the cardinal himself seemed possessed by some akin emotion; his eyes sparkled with vindictive vengefulness, and their piercing glance appeared to select victims from amid the shrinking ranks of his enemies, as he traversed the throngs of courtiers to approach the king. And Henry's attention was by this time powerfully turned to the fact that Wolsey continued to wave a bouquet of marigolds at every step of his advance, evidently soliciting his attention to it. "So, cardinal! come you to back the priest against the king?—and wear you marigolds, too, like all the rest of the world?"

"Nay, sire, I bring these to your grace—something soiled and tarnished by an audacious wearing! but I have plucked them where they should not grow, and have brought them where—mayhap—they will not be long a-withering when your grace shall discern their root is in a foreign soil!" replied Wolsey, and observing that Henry's attention was strongly excited, he continued, "I crave your highness's moment's privy attention on a very secret matter—yet not brought to me by runners from France or Italy! I would crave your grace's interference to prevent a great shame and disobedience to mine authority, by a certain young lord of my household—whom, as you know, I have betrothed to the daughter of the Earl of Shrewsbury—and who is falsely misled by a certain Fata Morgana of this court, to refuse fulfilment of his plighted faith!"

Henry's ruddy complexion waxed almost white as these words reached his ears, saving where some frightful blotches continued to burn on his brows. "Nay, if you bring sudden news of the state, my lord—we will hear whatsoever you would say apart!" he murmured, snatching the marigolds wildly. "Suffolk, see my bird accoutred; but methinks he hath had foul play already, and for a long season!"

The courtiers, with varied sentiments of dismay, were now doomed to behold the king and his dreaded minister walk away together, side by side, and disappear in the passage leading to the solitary Little Cloister, deserted of its accustomed denizens, the novices and lay brethren.

"What ails you, Mistress Anne?" said Jane Seymour, raising, but scarcely opening her soft eyes, as she peered into the troubled visage of her fellow maid of honour.

"I am sick at heart to think—how we must see these fowls tear and rend each other like—like Christian men! Where is my brother, George Boleyn?—Oh, George Boleyn, my brother! how will this end?"

"Keep up your heart, sweet sister!—only in, mayhap, a flight to France; and I would gladly see Madame de Crèvecœur's witching eyes again!" said George Boleyn, who had already hastened to his sister's side. But he also looked pale; and, in fact, when the cardinal and the king returned—which was not for several minutes, but then with the latter's arm round the former's neck, in the height, as it seemed, of confidential communication—the exposition of the head of Medusa could scarcely have turned more visages to a stony fixity and hue.

"Ho, sirs, why stare ye all amort?" was

the king's habitual exclamation, in a tone of rough and ferocious pleasantry that affrighted more than any open outburst. "We can proceed with our sport—our news are not ill—they are old ones, too!—old as the world! We all saw—or, by'r Lady, should have seen—in the miracle-play, to-day, how from the beginning women were traitresses and deceivers all! —The cardinal brings us only a jolly news of a bridalty toward, which he purposes to solemnise within such time as the wedding cates can be made ready, and two potent earls summoned hitherward from the north! Mistress Anne, you love sports and revels of all kinds, and have a good invention in the dance! I pray you fashion one for thou and I to pace, in the marriage which is at hand between my Lord Percy of Northumberland, and his contracted bride, the Lady Mary Talbot!"

"We are but lost, Suffolk!—and the wildfire coquette has done it all!" muttered Norfolk to his compeer.

"Hush!—let us hear what she can answer. They who hunt the boar must expect to lose a dog at times!" returned the duke.

"Ay, my most royal lord! Well, they have been long contracted to each other!—There is a dance newly come from France, if it might please your highness, we will foot it in!" re-

plied Anne, with truly wonderful self-possession. "My lord cardinal, made you not the contract with my Lord of Shrewsbury? And, certes, ye cannot think to keep it by plaiting your grizzled beards together!"

"Mistress Anne is merry, sir!" observed Wolsey, with a livid but triumphant smile. "She deals in no *sarsenet* phrases, in very sooth!—though by her descent from my lord mayor mercer Boleyn, well she might!"

"Why should you *bark* at me therefore, my lord cardinal? The mercers' is an honourable guild—to the full, at least, as the haughtiest butcher in the land can boast his own to be!" was the bitter and imprudent retort.

"Damsel," replied Wolsey, still with his smile, "we are not ashamed of our parentage, with those of like degree, and are only haughty of it with higher ones who think us shame thereof! We are what we are, and not what our ancestors have been!"

"And shall be what we should be, when the blind can see again!" returned Anne.

"What say ye now, lady! Will ye wager on my royal Charlemagne *now*?" said Henry, with a fierce, yet eager, and imploring glance.

"No, my good liege, no! I am a poor knight's daughter, that can but ill afford to lose

the value of a tinsel tag; and, by foul means or fair, I know the cleric will win!" replied Anne.

"To the pit, then! Charlemagne shall prove the augury false! Where is he, Charles? Where is my royal champion?"

"All is ready, sire!" returned the Duke of Suffolk, releasing Charlemagne from his cage, who—we cannot degrade the glorious emperor into a *which*—alighting on the arena, shook his wings, and erecting himself on tiptoe uttered a shrill clarion note of defiance.

"Ho, friar, make ready for the sign! Mistress Anne, will it please you then to bet upon the winner's side, *against* us?" said Henry, in scarcely articulate tones of stifled passion.

"Ay, sir, cheerfully—you cannot win, I say!" returned Anne, with a quivering smile, and yet managing to suppress the tears that were ready to burst from her very soul. "And I will wager all that my lord cardinal will pay, for St. Dominic's cause is his—and he is the best able, in all this land, to lose, if by some miracle King Charlemagne should win! What will you wager on my behalf, my lord cardinal?"

"My marigolds! — the one of my possessions I value least!' replied Wolsey.

"And so—have given them to the king,

my lord?" returned the too sharp-witted beauty.

"They are not mine! I will not have them now, at any gift!" shouted Henry; "and if I win them, I will not wear them, but give them to my fool, Will Somers, to make a greater one of him than myself had nigh been made, if it may be!—But I take your gage, lady, and stake my dagger against, that if you win I may know where to find my mortal foe!"

No one dared to interpret this furious speech, even by an exchanged glance. Meanwhile Charlemagne traversed the pit, crowing and clapping his wings, with all a warrior's pride and defiance. This imperial fowl was of remarkable size and beauty, of a brilliant red plumage, with an erect comb, and spurs lengthened by his armour into long and sharp penknives—no unlike representative of his royal owner. St. Dominic was also a very large and stately bird, and his raven plumage formed a strong contrast to his challenger—whom he seemed very desirous to encounter, for Gildas could scarcely restrain his impetuous courage, by main force, and all manner of fond cajoleries, while one of the lay-brothers fastened on his weapons also. These preparations were soon completed, and Henry gave

the signal of the onset by dashing the bunch of marigolds into the lists, and shouting "*Aux prises*!" St. Dominic instantly flew from his master's arms, and alighted before his foe with a deeper toned but equally perceptible defiance in the yell with which he accompanied his descent. Charlemagne responded with lusty vigour, amidst a general round of applause and shouts from the courtiers, hoping thus to soothe their angry lord. The chivalric fowls then faced each other, disdainfully scratching up the gravel, strutting, clapping their wings, and incensing each other with still more insulting crows. An universal clapping of hands stirred their martial emulation yet more fiercely — and finally they flew at one another, and in a moment, a wild and evidently mortal conflict raged!"

"Holy Dominic, our namesake! St Peter, patron of cocks! St. Edward, of our Abbey! be with the good fowl, and give him the victory!" shouted Gildas, devoutly falling on his vast knees, as he threw his cock into the arena.

"St. George and St. Denis withstanding, victory, Charlemagne!" shouted the king.

It is surprising what strong emotions followed the variations of the ensuing conflict! But, at all times an exciting sport, there was

a vehement political interest inexplicably mingled with the contest. The courtiers laid eager wagers with each other, and it was remarked that the most devoted to Wolsey betted on Charlemagne, while the king's favourite attendants staked heavily on St. Dominic. Wolsey himself, with his usual adulatory subserviency quickened by spite, took vehement part with Charlemagne. The king became irrationally eager in the contest, and continued to urge on his bird with as much impetuosity as if it had been an armed host battling for his crown. The cocks themselves fully shared their owners' frenzy; and the lists were soon covered with scattered feathers, and the gravel sprinkled with gore, as if a shower of ladybirds had alighted on it.

The chances of the conflict changed as frequently as those between two rival bipeds of a nobler species might have done. Now cowered St. Dominic beneath the victorious claws of Charlemagne, beaten by his pinions, pierced by his spurs, his head and crest torn and bleeding under furious strokes of the bill! Then the king yelled with triumph and joy, and Anne ejaculated the most poignant expressions of grief and dismay. Every stroke, every buffet, told on the sympathetic frame of St. Dominic's master. Bulky as he was,

Gildas leaped high up in the air at every wound—yelled, ejaculated, groaned, according to the estimable effects of the injuries his bird received! But, anon, St. Dominic had arisen, had regained the vantage—had leaped upon his enemy's back, and was furiously stabbing into it, every stroke telling in the varying cries and cheers of the spectators! Anne, with her natural imprudence and vivacity, or perhaps, with a formed intention of disgusting and disheartening the king, gave way to the wildest ebullition of delight at this turn in the battle, and the interest of all in the struggle heightened to a species of delirium! The spectators hung over the ropes, and were pressed so forward that it was wonderful how they prevented themselves from swaying over into the arena, while Henry and the monk, privileged to enter it, kept assiduously behind each his bird, oblivious of any distinction of rank! It was at this ill-timed moment that the Lord Percy's voice was heard behind a group of the foremost spectators, murmuring in a tone intended to express regret, "The Abbey cock will surely win!—Charlemagne's thrapple is nigh torn out!" Unable to endure the excess of his apprehensions, or perhaps, with a desperate desire to know the worst, the young noble had ventured to disobey his lord's

command, and presented himself thus unseasonably both in speech and time before his terrible rival!

"Ha, say you so, Blue Lion cub! Thou liest, I say! Charlemagne *shall* win the field or die!" yelled the exasperated king, glaring at the personage thus saluted as the offspring of the heraldic blazon of his house, and looking very like his own full-grown red one! "Charlemagne shall win the field or die!" But as he spoke an uproar of conflicting cries announced that some remarkable turn in the alectriomachy had taken place. "Charlemagne is beaten!—pay, lordings, pay!—St. Dominic for ever!" shouted George Boleyn; and Henry indeed beheld his cock, bleeding from unnumbered wounds, his comb and feathers hanging in tatters about him, flying round the lists—like Hector round the walls of Troy, pursued by his vaunting foe! St. Dominic, in little better plight than his adversary, but in the enthusiasm of victory, followed his beaten antagonist, flapping his wings, exhaustedly crowing, and making every effort to overtake and strike his bloody spurs into Charlemagne's brain!

"Yea, coward! yea, heartless craven! wilt thou flee?—By St. George, my cock hath had foul play while I turned my head! It is

a drawn match, or, by all the saints, shall be!" yelled Henry, and the furious tyrant leaped with all his crushing weight upon the conqueror, while he bestowed so potent a kick upon his own defeated champion, that he cast him like a ball from a trap into the air. Charlemagne descended with outspread wings, a lifeless, bleeding, but still quivering carcass, on the arena—where St. Dominic already lay, a mass of gory plumage!

"St. Dominic! St. Dominic! my son, my son!—my blessed champion!—Foul befall thee, sir king, for thou hast slain the bravest and the noblest cock ever egg hatched!" sobbed Gildas, too late interposing his large fat hands between the trampling hoofs of Henry and his beloved bird! Then raising St. Dominic's mangled corpse, he burst into a huge splutter of tears, pressing it in an agony of grief to his breast, blowing in at its bill, and using all the arts of the tenderest affection to revive it.

Only Wolsey ventured to speak beside; all the rest of the courtiers looked on in silent and aghast dismay. "Well done, my noble liege!" he exclaimed, entering with his accustomed tact and servility into the mood of his dread master: "What kingly heart could bear to see an emperor flying before a beggarly monk!"

"Well done, say you, lord cardinal?" exclaimed Anne, yielding to the paroxysm of scorn and indignation in her heart, or, perhaps, willing to concentrate the king's fury on herself. "Well done, say you?—ay, for a treacherous priest's applause, who wins ever by false play! But ill done, say I—most unknightly and unkingly done—to slay the noble bird in his triumph, and make him share the recreant's doom!—My liege, I claim your wage forfeit! give me your dagger, for it is mine—or never again let any subject presume to be a gamester with your grace!"

Henry looked at the intrepid and defying countenance of the beautiful woman who thus dared—the first that ever had so dared—to chafe with him in his stormiest mood! All present expected some signal mark of vengeance, perhaps little inferior to that which had overtaken the unfortunate St. Dominic, would overwhelm her. There was a pause of utter silence. "Take it then!—here is my dagger!—It is not for a woman's wear; but doubtless you have your favourite, to whom to give it, Mistress Anne! Give it to whom you will—with the eternal hatred and vengeance of Henry of England!"

"Hath it this talisman attached, my liege?"

said Anne, to the wonder of the whole assemblage, accepting the weapon which the king threw naked to her feet as he uttered the words. There was a moment's pause of breathless interest, and, as Anne stooped to raise the dagger, Percy shrunk back as if he feared the perilous partiality of his mistress might bestow it upon him! But Anne, with an indefinable smile, and a profound abaisance, turned, and presented it to the cardinal! "I give it to you then, my Lord cardinal of York, and Legate of the Holy See, in these parts!"

"If this be in sign of your open war with holy church and her ministers, I take it, Mistress Anne, and return it to the Defender of the Faith!—You may have your marigolds again—they are something soiled and dusty, but belike they came so out of France!" returned that equal adversary, with a corresponding gesture.

"A brother at least may raise and wear them without offence!" said George Boleyn, boldly stepping forward, and possessing himself of the fallen flowers.

"You are Dinah's brother, mayhap?—but may we say *Diana's*, Master Boleyn?" said Wolsey, with triumphant scorn; and both

Norfolk and Suffolk shrunk from the menacing joy in his glance.

"Nay, sir, King Francis would sing Mistress Boleyn's praise as Venus only!

> "Vénus n'était blonde, comme on dit,
> On voit bien qu'elle est brunette!"

subjoined the malignant tones of George Boleyn's wife.

"Keep them, Master Boleyn, and let me see you wear them at this great bridalty we are to celebrate anon!" said Henry. "Come, cardinal, we will lend you our poor aid to devise how it may most suddenly come to pass! You shall be a bridesmaid, Mistress Anne, and ourself one of the bridegroom's men, albeit we are no bachelor, we own! My Lord Percy, we will throw the stocking together, to your good luck, when you wed—as soon you shall—with your fair betrothed, Shrewsbury's daughter, Mary!"

Henry's sullen eyes, and Anne's, sparkling with vehement feeling, rested for the like space on Percy's white visage. A space of full a minute — a minute of utter silence throughout the audience: but he made no protest—no reply!

"Will it please your highness now to permit

me to retire? I must to the duties of mine attendance," said Anne, after this pause, turning away from the spectacle presented by her lover, and speaking in tones of preternatural calmness.

"Ay, go—ay, go!—we have no further need of you here!" returned Henry, with a glance that even then shook the heart of Anne Boleyn, proud as it was, and years before she recognised a barbarous destroyer's in it! It might be, in truth, there was something more terrible in its expression than that of the unmitigated ferocity which, in the future jousts of Greenwich, announced to the second queen of Henry VIII. the sealing of her doom! There was passion mingled with the wild and blood-thirsty anger of that glance—the savage, merciless passion of a Tarquin—which curdled the blood to her heart! Nevertheless, with the indomitable courage that formed a part of her rash but noble nature, she curtseyed quietly, and taking her brother's arm, withdrew with measured steps from the turbid scene.

END OF VOL. II.

LONDON: J. MORTIMER, 141, STRAND.

ND BY

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS-URBANA
3 0112 074724441